

DECEMBER 2, 1921

No. 844

7 Cents

**FAME**

AND

# **FORTUNE WEEKLY.**

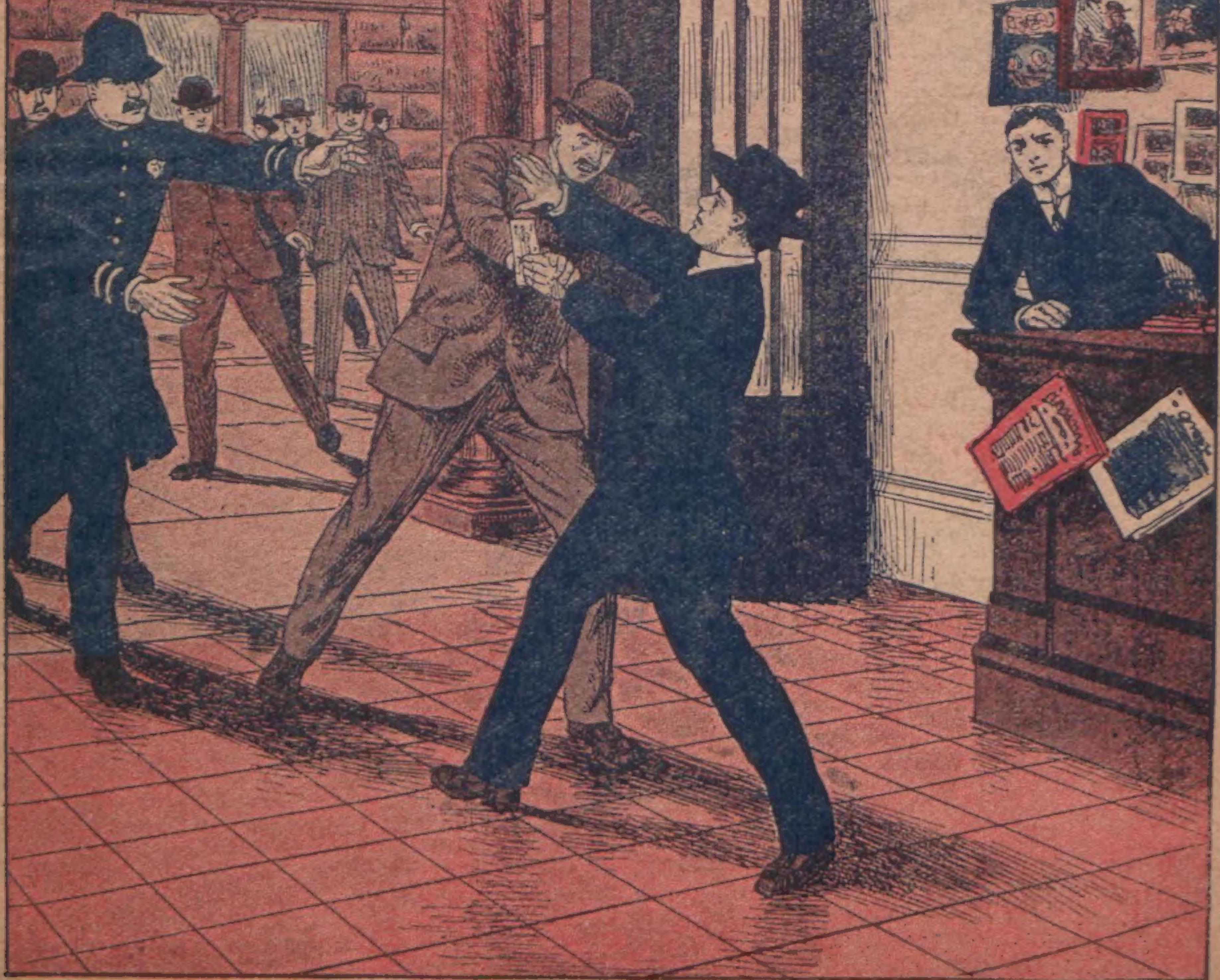
**STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.**

**CHECK 765**

**OR THE STRANGE PIP IN WALL ST.**

**AND OTHER STORIES**

*y A Self-Made Man*



"Ha! where did you get that check?" cried Nostrand, seizing hold of the boy. "Give it to me. It is mine." "No, it is not yours, and you sha'n't have it," replied Joe. The struggle that ensued attracted a policeman.



# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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No. 844

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 2, 1921.

Price 7 Cents

## CHECK 765

### OR, THE STRANGEST TIP IN WALL STREET

By A SELF-MADE MAN

#### CHAPTER I.—Introducing Joe Sturgess.

"Is my father in?" said a sweet voice in the ear of Joe Sturgess one morning, as he sat in his chair absorbed in the perusal of the latest financial intelligence in the columns of the *Daily Argus*.

Joe, who was office boy and messenger to Nathaniel Drew, a stock broker of some prominence in Wall Street, sprang to his feet and faced Miss Grace Drew, his employer's only daughter and heiress, a very pretty miss of fifteen, who had entered the reception room unperceived by him.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Drew; I didn't notice you come in. Yes, your father is in, but he is engaged with a bank director and cannot be disturbed. Will you take a seat?"

"It's a lovely day, isn't it?" said the young lady, as she took the chair next to Joe's.

"Yes, though I haven't noticed it in particular. In one sense all days are alike to us messengers. We have to hustle around delivering messages whether it's fine or stormy. Business goes on in Wall Street even if a blizzard is tearing things up generally. You'll excuse me if I say you are looking fine."

"Do you think so?" she said, with a coquettish smile.

"With the evidence before me, I can't help thinking so."

At that moment the door of the private room opened and Mr. Drew came out with his visitor, whom he saw to the outer door. When he returned, his daughter met him and they went inside together. In a few minutes the cashier sent Joe out on an errand. He carried a note to a broker in Exchange place. As he went in at the main entrance a trader named Nostrand came out in a hurry, and they came together with a bump.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" cried Nostrand, giving him a shove to one side.

"I didn't see you," retorted Joe.

"It's your business to keep your eyes open."

"You ought to have used your eyes, too," answered the boy, walking toward the elevator that was about to start up.

"That's Drew's boy. I'll report him," growled Nostrand, as he went on down the street.

Joe delivered his note and started back. As ill-luck would have it, as he swung around into Broad street, he came smack against Broker Nostrand again, knocking off that man's derby.

"I beg your pardon!" said Joe, stooping to pick up the hat.

Nostrand, as mad as a hornet, raised his foot and kicked at the boy, who was in a tempting position at the moment. Joe, however, saw the foot coming and grabbed it with one hand, at the same time rising up. Nostrand lost his balance and went down on his back with some force. Naturally the incident attracted some notice, and the laugh was on the broker. Joe had not meant to upset him, and offered his hand to assist him to rise, but the trader refused it, got up unassisted, seized his hat and then handed the boy a heavy slap on the face which made his cheek tingle.

The crack made Joe mad, for he had been given no chance to avoid it. The appearance of a policeman coming that way put an end to what might have been a scene, and Joe kept on his way. When he reached the office he was sent out again almost immediately. Nothing happened on that trip. On his way back he met a particular friend of his named Dick Singleton.

"Hello, Joe! You're just the chap I wanted to see," said Dick.

"You've got your wish. What can I do for you? If you want to touch me for a fiver, I'll accommodate you with pleasure," grinned Joe.

"Nothing of the sort. When did I ever ask you for a loan?"

"Your memory is short. A week ago you borrowed—"

"A nickel. I recall the fact, and also that I haven't paid you. Here it is. Now listen, I've a tip for you."

"A tip, eh? Elucidate."

"It's worth ten per cent. of the profits."

"You shall have it if there's anything in it."

"A. & C. is about to take on a boom."

"Who gave you that valuable inside news?"

"Nobody gave it to me. They wouldn't be such fools. I picked it up."

"Lucky boy. How?"

"In an office I visited an hour ago."

"Let's have the facts."

Dick gave them.

"It looks pretty good," said Joe.

"It's a regular eighteen-carat cinch. If I had the money I'd go in for the limit. You have money, so get in yourself, and when you cash in on the profit kindly remember yours truly to the extent of the promised ten per cent."

"I'll consider it," said Joe, and the boys separated.

**CHAPTER II.—Joe Undertakes a Mission for a Stranger.**

Joe, after some consideration, decided to get in on A. & C., so at the first chance he visited the little bank on Nassau street and put up nearly all his funds as marginal security on 50 shares at 80. Dick's information indicated that a syndicate was behind the stock, and that if the combine succeeded in carrying out its plans the price was likely to go to par. That afternoon Joe was sent to deliver a package containing a dozen \$100 bonds belonging to a certain industrial company to a firm of Jersey City brokers. It was a disagreeable day, raining at intervals, and when the boy left the office the atmosphere was thick with mist that seemed to be the precursor of a still thicker fog. With his overcoat buttoned up about his throat, his soft hat pulled down close above his eyes, and an umbrella in his hand, Joe started for the ferry.

He passed a hurrying throng of persons out on business and finally reached Cortlandt street, down which he walked rapidly to West street, crossed that wide thoroughfare, entered the ferry house and boarded the boat which was just about to start across the river. He went out in front at first, for he didn't relish the stuffy air of the men's cabin, but after the boat started the rain came on again and made the exposed part of the boat undesirable, so he retreated to a spot just outside the cabin door. Here he found a sallow-featured man, with a black mustache, hugging the corner.

"Nasty day," said the man, looking sharply at Joe.

"Very," answered the boy.

"Going across the river on business, I suppose?"

"I wouldn't go across to-day for any other reason."

"Are you acquainted in Jersey City?"

"Only around the business section where the mining brokers are."

"Do you work in Wall Street?"

"Yes."

"For a broker?"

"Yes."

"Have an easy snap, I suppose?"

"Very fair."

"What do you do?"

Joe gave him a general idea of his duties.

"Want to earn ten dollars?"

Joe looked at the man in surprise.

"What doing?" he asked.

"I want to send an important package to a house on the Hackensack River, near the railroad bridge. I'll give you ten dollars if you deliver it."

"You can hire a regular messenger boy to take it for less than that."

"I know it, but the boy might be a careless one and lose the package."

"The company will be responsible for the package."

"You're a Wall Street boy, and I can see you're smart. I'd rather trust you than an ordinary messenger."

"You say the package is an important one?"

"Yea."

"How is it you are willing to trust it to me? You don't know me."

"You must give me your name and the name of your boss in Wall Street. I will accompany you where you are bound to make sure you're all right. That will be enough for me."

"What's your name, and where is your place of business?"

"I am not in business. I'm from Chicago and am stopping at the St. Denis Hotel on Broadway. My name is John Downey."

"Then you are a stranger in this locality?"

"Yes. I've only been East two days."

"I suppose you want me to bring you a receipt for the package?"

"Perhaps you had better," said the man, after a pause. "Put it in an envelope and mail it to me at the hotel."

By this time the boat glided into her slip and the passengers had disembarked. The rain had stopped so that umbrellas were not needed.

"You'll take the package?" said the man, as they stepped out of the ferry building.

"Yes, I guess so. I might as well make the money, as I have nothing else on hand," replied Joe.

"Then I'll go along with you," said Downey.

They went to the neighborhood where the Jersey City brokers had their offices, and Joe delivered his package, taking a receipt for it. The boy expected the man would ask a question or two about him of the clerk who took the package, but he did not. He appeared to be satisfied that Joe was all right. When they came out into the corridor the man pulled a fairly weighty package from under his overcoat and handed it to Joe.

"Be careful not to drop it," he said.

"No danger of that," returned Joe.

"Here's ten dollars and a quarter. If the man gives you a receipt, mail it: otherwise it won't matter. I'll know by to-morrow night if he got it all right, and as I have a line on you I feel safe enough."

They separated at the street door and Joe made his way to a line of cars that would take him close to his destination if the man's directions were right. As he rode along, the gloom of the afternoon deepened, and the mist grew thicker, but the rain did not come on again.

As the car approached the river he asked the conductor if he knew anything about the house he was bound for, but the man didn't. In less than ten minutes Joe stepped off the car, the conductor, with a grin, wishing him good luck. The mist, having an unobstructed sway out there, appeared to be thicker than the boy had noticed while riding through the streets. When he had gone what he judged to be a quarter of a mile he began looking for the house, but saw nothing of the kind, for the mist and the gloom blotted things out all around him. Keeping as near the line of the river, which he could not see, as he thought it prudent to go, he kept on. He expected there would be one or more lights in the house that would serve to guide him there, but not a glimmer could he make out in all the neighborhood around.

"I guess I'll earn the ten dollars, all right," he said.

After tramping what he believed was another

quarter of a mile, he saw something dark looming up ahead. He walked straight toward the dark patch which showed itself in spots through the mist, and it gradually assumed the outlines of a good-sized three-story mansion, with a cupola on top. It was surrounded by a rusty iron fence which the boy almost ran into before he discovered it. A gate was affixed to two stone pillars, and was intended to open from the center. One side stood slightly ajar, and, pushing it open, Joe entered the barren-looking grounds. A carriageway formed of small pebbles led up to a wide porch and the front door. Weeds and rang grass sprouted out of this, showing that the place was grossly neglected by the occupants. Joe stepped on the porch and looked for the bell handle. He found it, gave it a pull, and it came away in his hand.

"Well," muttered the boy, "this place seems to be falling to pieces."

He noticed that something had dropped when the bell gave way, so he struck a match to see what it was. It proved to be a card bearing the words, "Bell out of order."

He laid the handle of the doorbell down and started for the rear of the house. As he passed the last of four wide windows a light suddenly flashed up inside the room. It came so unexpectedly that Joe stopped and looked in through the window. The light came from a match held in the fingers of a man attired in a smart business suit. In his other hand he had a candlestick, and by the time Joe had taken in his personality he lit the candle. Then he turned and held the light above a motionless object stretched out as stiff as a log of wood on a table. Joe's gaze rested on the object, and he uttered a gasp. The figure was that of a man, and his set, white face showed he was a corpse.

### CHAPTER III.—The Conversation Joe Heard.

"My gracious! A dead man!" ejaculated Joe, quite startled by the sight.

At that point a second man entered the room. He was not a pleasant-looking individual. He had a bullet-shaped head which was covered with a shock of coarse, red hair.

"Do you think he'll do, after sundry alterations, I mean?" asked the newcomer of the other, in a hoarse voice.

The words came so clear to Joe's ear that he was surprised until he observed that the window sash was up an innh.

"He is the right height and build. If his teeth are good, he'll aswer," replied the other.

"His teeth are all right. If they weren't, what good would he be? His identification depends mostly on his teeth after they've been fixed to suit."

"Of course," said the man in the business suit. "He'll do. After the fire has done its work there will be just enough left of him for the insurance people to pass upon."

"If they accept the identification—"

"You, Jim and I will divide a fat boodle between us."

"I wish that package would come that Jim was

to send, then we could get to work on the stiff and fix him up for the test."

"Have any trouble getting him?"

"Not the slightest. The keeper was glad to get him off his hands."

"Who is he? Do you know?"

"No. He had nothin' in his pockets when found, fortunately. That made it easy for me."

"Nothing, eh?"

"Nothin' except a cancelled cherk."

"Where is the check?"

The other man went to the mantelpiece, took something off it and handed it to the party in the business suit. He looked at it curiously, turned it over and consulted the endorsement, holding it to the light. Joe, who was immensely interested, not to say surprised, by all he heard, easily saw that it was a bank check, and that it bore the perforation of the bank which had cashed it.

"You say you found the check in his pocket?"

"It wasn't exactly in his pocket. It was sewed in the linin' of his pants."

"How came you to discover that?"

"I felt somethin' through the cloth, investigated, and found the check."

"Then the morgue keeper didn't know it was there?"

"I reckon not, for they take everythin' out of a corpse's clothes to use for purposes of identification."

"So I thought; that's why I asked. The check, I see, is Number 765, which shows that the signer of the check was a depositor of the bank for some time."

"I don't see that the check cuts much ice. It won't do us no good."

"Well, I've seen all I want of this stiff. We'll leave him until the package gets here," said the man in the business suit.

The two men then left the room, taking the candle with them. Joe wondered what he ought to do, in the light of the revelations that had so unexpectedly come to him. Ought he to go back to town and turn the package over to the police, with his statement of the case as far as he had become acquainted with it? That would probably insure the arrest of the three insurance conspirators—the two here and Jim at the St. Denis Hotel in New York. He would be able to identify all three, for he had got a good look at their faces. Then it struck him that possibly the man Jim did not live at the St. Denis Hotel, but had merely given that house as his address.

Wouldn't it be better for him to deliver the package, then hang around the outside of the house, which he might easily do, undetected, in the thick mist, and watch through the window what the men did to the corpse? He would thus give them the opportunity to manufacture evidence against themselves. After figuring the matter out he decided that would be the better way. As he started for the back door to announce his presence, he thought of the cancelled check numbered 765. It was in the pock-marked man's possession. He intended to destroy it. Joe felt that it would probably be the means of establishing the identity of the corpse, and therefore it was important it should be recovered by the police.

Reaching the rear door, Joe pounded on it. In

a few moments he heard steps inside, and a voice asked through the keyhole who was there.

"I've got a package for the occupant of this house," replied the lad.

He heard a chain taken down, a bolt shot back, a key turned and then the door opened, revealing an indistinct figure in the darkness which, however, from his voice, Joe knew was the pock-marked man, whose name was Fletcher. A match was flashed in the boy's face.

"Where's the package?" asked Fletcher guffily.

"Here," said Joe.

"Give it to me."

"I want a receipt for it. It's important."

The man hesitated a moment or two.

"Got a piece of paper about you?" he asked. "I'll write my name on it. That will be enough, for he knows my signature."

"No, I haven't any paper," replied Joe.

The man fumbled in his pockets, finally pulled something out, put it against the wall in the dark, and wrote his name on it.

"Here, that'll do," he said, hastily shoving the paper at the boy.

Joe took it and handed over the package.

"You were paid for bringing it, wasn't you?" said Fletcher.

"Yes, that's right," replied Joe.

"Well, here's half a dollar for you in addition. It's a nasty night and it's worth something extra tramping away out here. You'd better hurry back to the trolley before the fog gets thicker or you might lose your way. Good night."

The door was shut, locked, bolted, and chained in Joe's face.

#### CHAPTER IV.—Joe Unexpectedly Enters the House.

Joe shoved the paper carelessly into his pocket. He had fulfilled his errand and earned the \$10, now he was at liberty to carry out his own plans, which he intended to do. He walked around to the window which commanded the interior of the room where the corpse lay, took up his position and awaited developments. The moments passed and nothing happened. He decided to walk around the house to see if the men were on the other side. He kept close to the house to feel his way. He did not see the old-fashioned inclined cellar flap which stood in his way, and he stumbled over the edge of it and fell upon it with all his weight.

The flaps had been in position ever since the house was built, a great many years since, and the wood, though it looked fairly solid enough on the outside, was little better than punk. They could not stand the impact of Joe's 150 pounds, and they collapsed with a dull crash, and he was precipitated into the cellar. He hit the wood flooring with his head and arms, while his legs struck the wooden steps. He might easily have broken an arm, or even his neck, for the drop was all of six or seven feet and he landed awkwardly. Fortunately his luck was in the ascendant at the moment, and he escaped scot free of any injury except a pair of barked shins; but for some minutes he lay dazed and motionless in a heap, just as he had tumbled.

The noise did not attract the attention of the

two men, who had entered the room where the corpse lay and prepared to get busy. The first thing they did was to pin a double sheet of newspaper over the lower sash of each of the two windows. Joe finally picked himself up and felt of his arms and legs, wondering if he really was all there.

"My!" he ejaculated, "that was a tumble and a half. It fairly knocked me silly. That is what a person gets for monkeying around an unfamiliar building in the fog and darkness. I wonder if the men heard the noise of my fall? I should think they would. I had better get ready to sneak the moment I hear them coming to find out the cause of the disturbance."

He listened, but heard no sounds indicating the coming of the men. Then he limped up to the top of the cellar entrance and stood there looking toward the back door. He heard nothing there, either.

"Maybe they didn't hear the sound," he thought.

He waited a while, and as nothing happened he came to the conclusion that the occupants were ignorant of the accident. Striking a match, of which he always carried a supply, he looked around the cellar. It was lumbered up with all sorts of useless truck—broken boxes, boards, bits of wood and any amount of dirt and dust. Festoons of cobwebs hung from the beams, and they were black and heavy with dirt. The place had evidently not been in use for a long time. He looked around for a door and found one half-way down the cellar which admitted him to a partitioned off section where a stairway led to the first floor. There was a door at the head of the stairs. As Joe ascended the stairs he wondered if it was secured on the other side. If it was he could not hope to explore any further part of the house. On trying the handle he found the door was not locked or bolted, and he stepped into the kitchen. A lamp, turned low, was burning on the top of the stove, which was rusty and showed little signs of use. There was no furniture at all in the room, nor was there a dish or a single cooking utensil in sight. The stove, which appeared to be a part of the house, was the only article, save a couple of empty boxes, in the place.

"The house is clearly an unoccupied and unfurnished one which these men have temporarily taken possession of, doubtless without the knowledge of the owner," said Joe.

He perceived a paper bag on the stove, which he looked into and saw that it contained a sandwich. The door of the kitchen stood ajar and, opening it a little more, the boy looked out into a narrow entry. Striking a match, he saw two doors. He listened at both, but heard no sound, nor did the least glimmer of light filter through the keyholes. He opened the nearest one and gazed into a black void. Another match disclosed it to be a bare room which probably had been used as a dining-room. The other door opened on the hall leading to the front door. Stepping into it he saw a light shining under the door nearest him, and he heard the voice of Fletcher speaking. He also heard a light, pounding sound.

"They are working on the corpse. I wonder what they are doing to it?" he thought.

His rubber shoes made no noise on the boards as he glided to the door and put his eye to the keyhole. His range of vision was not extensive, but it took in the head of the corpse. The well-dressed man was operating on one of its teeth. On the dead man's breast lay a hand-drill. The man had made a big hole in the tooth and was pounding gold filling into it with the confidence of an expert dentist. He was not a dentist, however.

"There, that one is done," said the well-dressed man. "It may not be an artistic job, but it will answer for identifying the molar when what is left of the cremated corpse is brought to light. Let me see, the other tooth that the insured has filled is this one, isn't it?"

"That's the one. It has a gold cap on it," said Fletcher.

"Yes, I know. Here is the golden plug that will give a good imitation of the cap after I have filed away the tooth and drilled it," said the other.

The speaker picked up a small file and began work.

"I must say this isn't a pleasant job," he said, "but as there is the promise of big money it it I have undertaken it."

"When you finish with that tooth you're done," said Fletcher.

At that moment the well-dressed man came out of the room with the candle in his hand, followed by Fletcher with the tools. Joe could not help making some noise, for his consternation at finding himself at the wrong end of the hall he was not as careful as he might have been. The sounds attracted the attention of the men in his direction, and when they saw an indistinct figure at the hall door they experienced something of a shock.

"Look!" cried the well-dressed man, holding the light above his head, "there's somebody in the house."

Fletcher uttered an imprecation, dropped the tools and made a rush at Joe. The boy saw him coming and dashed downstairs. Unfortunately for him his arctics caught on the first step and he went down, sprawling. Before he could rise the man leaped on him and he was a prisoner.

"Fetch the light, Decker!" shouted Fletcher.

The well-dressed man came forward. Fletcher yanked Joe backward on his knees and pulled his head around.

"It's a boy," said Decker.

As he spoke Fletcher recognized Joe as the party who had delivered the package to him at the back door. He uttered an ejaculation of surprise. How had this boy, whom he supposed to be well on his way back the way he came, got into the house, and why was he there?

"So it's you, is it? What in thunder brings you in here, and how did you get in?" he said.

Joe realized that he was up against it, but he put on a bold front.

"I fell in here," he replied.

"Fell in here! What do you mean by that?"

Joe, wishing to make it appear that his presence in the house was an accidental one, explained that while walking toward the corner of the house he tripped over the cellar flaps, which he

did not notice in the mist; that the boards had given away and he fell into the cellar.

"That's the way you got in, was it?"

"Yes."

"I believe you were spying on us through the keyhole while we were in that room. Own up."

"I'll own up nothing," replied Joe.

With an imprecation, Fletcher pulled Joe with him down the hall, opened the door of a closet space under the stairs, gave him a shove, then closed the door and locked it. Thus the Wall Street boy found himself a prisoner in the dark.

## CHAPTER V.—How Joe Escaped His Fate.

Joe heard the men's retreating footsteps and then silence ensued.

"I'm in a nice pickle," he muttered. "I wonder what they will do with me? Their purpose is to set fire to the house to burn up the greater part of that corpse and make it appear that he lost his life in the flames. I'm afraid that pock-marked chap suspects that I know too much about their scheme. Suppose they should set fire to the house and leave me in it to burn up, that would be pretty fierce!"

The fear the boy entertained at that moment was the subject of argument at the same time between the men in the kitchen.

"It will never do for us to let that boy get away," said Fletcher. "He has learned enough about our plans to blow the gaff, and we must either do him up or be done up ourselves. After all the trouble we've been put to so far to work the scheme, it won't do to allow that lad to put the kibosh on it. He must go up with the house."

"But that will be murder," objected Decker.

"Suppose it is? 'Self-protection is the first law of nature.' As the case stands, it's he or us. No halfway measures will go."

"But I didn't bargain for anything of that kind," said Decker.

"Very well. You needn't have any hand in it. Do your share toward getting things ready for the torch and then light out. I'll stay behind and apply the match."

"But I'll be implicated in the matter."

"Not at all. You've got nothing to say about it, one way or the other. You came here chiefly to operate on the stiff's mouth. You've done that, and outside of giving me a lift with the preparations for the fire, you are out of it. I'll give you time enough to reach the trolley before I see her off. That's my plan, and I'm goin' to carry it out, so there isn't any use of you putting up any objection."

Decker saw that his companion was in earnest, so he gave up and for the next half hour they busied themselves with the inflammable material they had at hand. When everything was ready Fletcher told Decker to make a start. He did so, and the pock-marked man sat down to smoke his pipe in the kitchen. By the time he had finished, Decker was on a car speeding toward the ferry, by which he intended to cross over to New York and meet the third rascal somewhere up in a Tenderloin resort. Fletcher left the kitchen and entered the hall of the house. Going to the door of the closet under the stairs, he pounded on the door.

"Are you goin' to own up, young fellow?" he asked.

"Own up to what?" replied Joe.

"That you have discovered what is going on here."

"What are you talking about?"

"Tryin' to fool me, aren't you? Well, I'm too old a chicken to be caught by a shrimp like you. I know you're on to our game, and as either you or the game must go out of business, it'll have to be you. This building will be in flames in a few minutes, and you will have to take your chances where you are."

"Are you going to leave me here, like a rat in a trap, to be burned alive?" asked Joe.

"That's exactly what I'm going to do," said Fletcher, in a tone that showed he meant it.

"If I die, you'll be responsible for my death," said Joe, through the keyhole.

"I'm not worryin' about that. Your life is nothing to me."

"You will have to answer for the crime," said Joe desperately.

"There won't be enough left of you an hour from now to cause me any worry. Good night, and pleasant dreams to you."

Thus speaking, the scoundrel walked away and entered the room where the corpse was laid out on a thick bed of shavings and excelsior soaked in gasoline. Lying across his body in every direction were light pieces of wood. In fact, so well surrounded was the dead man with food for the flames that little of his body could be seen. Fletcher tore down the paper from the windows and looked out. The fog was thicker than ever. He threw up a sash to find out if there was any wind at all, but found there was not.

This was the only feature of the night that he did not like. He wished for a breeze to make the fire burn the quicker after it got well under headway. But he was powerless to change the conditions of nature. He had to let matters go as they were. Leaving the window as it was, he started to apply a light to the inflammable pile in several places. The flames sprang up quickly, and in a few moments the corpse was the center of a sea of fire. Fletcher, satisfied that his work was well under way, hurried from the room, leaving the door into the hall wide open.

As this door faced the closet in which the boy was imprisoned, perhaps he took an unholy satisfaction in letting his victim experience a foretaste of what was coming to him. The fire naturally was reflected into the hall and shone under the door of the closet, while the crackling of the burning wood was plainly apparent to Joe's ears. Fletcher could not resist the inclination to put it over the boy once more. He stopped and gave the closet door a thump.

"Do you see the light, young fellow?" he said. "The room across the hall is on fire. It is burning at a rate that will soon bring it out here, and then you will get a nice warming this foggy night. Now you see what you are getting for butting in on what did not concern you. Instead of one body, two will be found in the ruins tomorrow or next day, but I doubt if there will be enough left of you to show who you are. That's all I've got to say to you."

Fletcher hurried away, satisfied that the secret of the insurance swindle was safe, and was pres-

ently speeding across lots, but not in the direction of the trolley tracks. To board a car in that lonesome spot, with the flames of a burning house behind him lighting up the foggy air, might cause some suspicion to attach to himself, and that, under the circumstances, was not desirable. Left alone in the burning house, Joe for the first time lost his nerve. In his desperation he pounded futilely on the door, like a crazy boy.

All seemed vain, and he resigned himself to despair, fully assured he never would see the light of day again, or the faces of his widowed mother and sister, who, unconscious of his peril, were wondering what detained him downtown that foggy evening. Some precious moments elapsed, during which the fire made rapid progress, while Joe leaned helplessly against the door in a state of apathy. Suddenly he roused himself, and feeling for a match, struck it. Looking around the closet, he saw it contained divers pieces of broken furniture which had been thrown there when the last occupant moved out, over a year since.

The boy grabbed a heavy piece and attacked the door around the lock with it. He struck with all his strength, but was unable to do much damage to the lock, because it was within a thick part of the door. Then he did what he should have done first—struck at the panels, and as they were much weaker than the frame of the door, he presently splintered one of them. Then he got a full view of the blazing room, and realized that he had but very little time to accomplish his escape if it could be done at all. A terrific blow smashed the second panel. The centerpiece of the door, however, remained as an obstacle to be overcome. He attacked it with the heavy piece of mahogany, hitting it sideways. Bit by bit he knocked it away until he had greatly weakened its strength. Then he used his bit of wood as a lever and, exerting all his muscular power, he pulled against it.

With a crash it gave way and he tumbled backward on the floor. In a moment he was on his feet and, grabbing the centerpiece, worked it loose from the top. That left all the space he required to get out. As he started to spring out, with the heat of the flames in his face, he found out that he had put himself to a lot of useless trouble. The key was in the door, and he might easily have turned it and walked out after smashing the first panel. He turned it now and threw the broken door open. Rushing out, he made for the entry door, passed through into the kitchen, and found the door there unlocked, just as Fletcher left it.

As he passed out into the dense fog he saw the glow on the burning side of the house lighting up the mist in that direction like a kind of halo. He started post-haste for the trolley tracks and was halfway there, the fog all lit up behind him, when he recollects that he had left his umbrella behind in the kitchen of the building, where he stood it when he began his investigation of the rooms after coming up out of the cellar. What was an umbrella to him at that moment? It was of mighty little importance.

He had saved his life when he was almost at the last pinch, and his joy was so great over that fact that it dwarfed every other consideration.

Besides, it wasn't raining, anyhow. On he hurried across the soggy ground, and finally reached the tracks. He did not walk on the car track, for there was danger of the car coming up on him unawares in the fog and running him down, so he kept along the side of it. As the cars were all running slowly, it was some little time before one bound for the ferry overtook him, when he boarded it.

"A nice night to be out in," he remarked to the conductor.

"Yes, and a nice night for a fire, too," replied the man. "There's a big house burning along the river."

"I saw it," said Joe. "An out-of-the-way spot for the engines to go."

"Rather," nodded the conductor. "What brings you out in this direction this evening—visiting friends?"

"No. I came out on business."

Joe walked inside and took a seat. There were only a few people in the car, and they were all bundled up. In the course of an hour the car reached the ferry and Joe went aboard the waiting boat. It was a slow trip across the river, for the fog was as thick there as pea soup, and the pilot, who could not see his way, had to feel it with caution. Joe was mighty glad to step ashore in New York once more. It was eleven o'clock when he got home, and he found his mother and sisters greatly worried over his unexplained absence. He told them he was sent to Jersey City on business by Mr. Drew, and volunteered no further explanation, so they felt satisfied it was all right. He ate his supper, which had been kept warm against his return, and shortly afterward went to bed.

## CHAPTER VI.—Check 765.

He started for Wall Street at the usual time next morning. He looked his paper all over to see if the fire was printed in it, but it was not.

"I dare say there is a paragraph in the Jersey City papers about it. I should like to see what was printed," he said to himself.

There was small chance of his getting a Jersey City paper until after business hours, so he thought no more about it. The fog still hung around the lower part of the city, though it had thinned out somewhat, and the air was damp and things generally unpleasant. Joe had quite forgotten all about the cancelled check No. 765, which Fletcher found on the corpse, and which had at first interested him as offering a means of identifying the dead man. When he entered the office, the first to get there, he picked up that morning's *Daily Wall Street Argus* and sat down to look over the previous day's market report and other news of interest to him. He suddenly recalled the check.

"The pock-marked man doubtless dropped it in the fire, as he said he intended to get rid of it, and that's the end of it. The corpse will never be identified now, except as the insured, and I will see that that identification is exposed. If I knew what Goldfield bank the check was on, I might write out there. And yet what good would that do without I was able to furnish the name of the person who drew the check? No good at

all. I'm afraid the man from the West will have to rest in a nameless grave—what is left of him. Poor fellow! It is too bad. If he left no relatives to mourn his death, it will probably make little difference otherwise—but there is no use talking about it. It will be all the same a hundred years hence what becomes of the bones of any of us who are alive to-day."

Joe opened the *Argus* and turned to the market report. While he went over it, the clerks came in and entered the counting room, then came the stenographer, a pretty girl named Miss Foley, who smiled at Joe, as was her morning custom, and lastly the cashier arrived. The latter gentleman opened up the big safe, and work began for the day in the office. Mr. Drew usually reached the office about ten, but since he went to his villa on the Hudson, he had been arriving around half-past ten. He came to the city on a New York Central train which reached the Grand Central depot about ten o'clock.

At a quarter of ten this morning the cashier received a telephone message from him to the effect that he probably would not be at the office that day. Joe knew nothing about this, and when he came in from an errand at half-past ten he asked the cashier if the boss had arrived yet.

"No. He is not likely to be here to-day."

"Is that so? I'm sorry, for I wanted to see him about an important matter."

"It will have to go over till to-morrow, I'm afraid. By the way, there was a man in here asking for you while you were out."

"A man! What sort of person was he?"

The cashier gave him a rough description, but it was enough for Joe to identify the visitor as the man who hired him to take the package to the house on the Hackensack River.

"What did he say?"

"He asked if you were employed here, and when I said you were he looked around the place and then asked me where you were. When I told him you were out on an errand, he looked surprised."

Joe grinned, for he guessed the caller had expected to be told that he had not turned up yet.

"He gave me your name again, described you and asked me if I was sure you worked in the office. When I assured him you did, and that if he would sit down and wait he would see you shortly, he muttered something I didn't hear and left the office in a hurry. Do you know who he is?"

"I think I do," said Joe, who then walked over to his seat.

The boy had an idea why the man called. It was to make sure that Fletcher's report that he (Joe) had perished in the flames of the old house was true. At that point in his reflections the cashier called to Joe to go out with a message to the Exchange—to the young man who represented Mr. Drew in the board room. When he got to the Exchange he noticed on the blackboard that A. & C. had gone up half a point. He met Dick Singleton going in when he came out.

"Well, how about that tip?" asked Dick. "Going to act on it?"

"I've already done so."

"Good! You didn't lose any time. You're bound to make a fine thing out of it, and I see a nice little wad coming my way."

Joe was kept pretty busy right up to the moment he started for the bank to deposit the checks and cash which had been received that day, and consequently he had had no time to think further about the life insurance swindlers. At the bank he took his place at the end of the line gravitating toward the receiving teller's window. While making his way toward the window he began to consider his movements after he got off work. He decided to cross the river and go out to the scene of the fire. He thought it would be a good idea to take Dick with him, if his friend would go, as he did not think it would be safe for him to run against the conspirators if they should happen to be there and no one else.

Still he thought it was unlikely that Fletcher would go there, unless the fascination that is said to lure a criminal to the scene of his crime attracted him to the spot. Nor was it likely that Decker would find any interest in revisiting the place. The man Jim, however, might be there prepared to identify the remains if they were found by searchers. But if he asked Dick to go he would have to give some reason for visiting such an out-of-the-way spot, and the fact that he merely wanted to view the ruins of an old frame structure that had burned down during the night was hardly a good one. On the whole, he guessed he would have to make the trip alone. When he returned to the office he sat down in his seat to await further orders. Then it was he recalled the paper bearing Fletcher's signature which that individual had given him when he handed over the package.

"That ought to be a piece of evidence against him," he thought. "What did I do with it?"

He felt in the side pockets of his overcoat and drew out the paper. When he looked at it he gave a gasp of surprise. It was a cancelled check—the very check, in fact, that Fletcher had found in the trousers of the corpse, for it bore the number 765.

#### CHAPTER VII.—Joe Takes Up the Case With His Boss.

"Holy mackerel!" ejaculated Joe. "How came that rascal to hand this to me? He was going to destroy it, for Decker had advised him that it might, if found, prove an awkward clue to the corpse. It's on the Garfield National Bank and is signed by—hang me, if I can make out the signature. It's a corker!"

Joe turned it over and saw that it was indorsed by the man who drew it, for it was made payable to "Self." Across the paper Fletcher had scrawled his name, "T. Fletcher."

"It is clear that in the darkness the rascal did not know what he was handing me, but thought it was a piece of blank paper," thought Joe. "My, how people will sometimes give themselves away without meaning to do so! I have read that some of the sharpest criminals make slips, simple ones, that lead to their detection. This may prove a useful piece of evidence. I must look out for it. It's too valuable for me to carry around. I'll put it in an envelope and ask the cashier to place it in the safe."

He got an envelope, wrote his name on the

outside, and sealed up the check in it. Then he handed it to the cashier. Half an hour later he was off for the day. He started at once for Jersey City. It was a different afternoon from the previous one, being clear and sunshiny. He boarded a car and went out to the river. He could see nothing of the house, for it had burned completely to the ground. He saw a bunch of people some distance away, and he judged that was where the ruins were. He walked over there and soon made out a few blackened sticks standing here and there. Perhaps a dozen persons were walking around looking at the debris, and several boys were digging in the ashes. He kept a sharp lookout for the man Jim, whom he was sure he would easily recognize, but he saw no one that looked like him. He casually inquired if anybody had been burnt up in the fire, but no one had heard of such a casualty.

He hung around and questioned many of those present, but learned nothing. The ruins showed no signs of having been dug into, which proved that the chief schemer had done nothing as yet to bring what remained of the body to light. After remaining half an hour, he boarded a car and returned to New York. It was nearly seven when he reached home.

"Late again, Joe," said his eldest sister.

"Yes. I went over to Jersey to see the ruins of a house which burned down last night."

"What house was it?"

"Oh, it was just an old-fashioned mansion out near the Hackensack River."

"What made you so curious to see what was left of it?"

"I had a reason," said Joe, in a tone that indicated he wasn't saying what that reason was.

Next morning Mr. Drew appeared at the office. He was too busy for Joe to intrude on him. Finally along about two the broker called Joe in to send him on a special errand, then the boy told him he had something particular to see him about.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Drew.

"It's considerable of a story—too long to tell you now. I'd like to tell you before you go away."

"You can tell me after you come back from the bank."

At a quarter past three Joe went into the private room.

"Can you hear my story now, sir?" he said.

"Yes," said the broker; "I'll listen to you."

So Joe told about meeting the stranger on the Jersey City ferryboat, and then all that meeting led up to. That the broker was astonished goes without saying.

"Now I want your advice as to what course I shall pursue. The point I am aiming at is to get evidence enough against the men so that when they are arrested the insurance company will have some ground for proceeding against them. As the matter stands, my story is the only thing against them, and without some corroboration it would hardly suffice to hold the men on."

"Do you know the insurance company the men are trying to beat?"

"I do not."

"That is an important matter."

"I don't know the name of the man whose in-

surance money they are aiming at, either. That's another important fact."

The broker considered.

"You will have to wait for the rascals to act first," he said. "The difficulty is that you won't be able to tell when they do act unless they are watched. The only way to have them looked after is to put the police in possession of the facts. They won't make any arrest until they secure corroboration of your story."

"I went out to the scene of the fire yesterday afternoon to see if any attempt had been made to bring the burned corpse to light, but none had. It is my opinion that the insurance conspirators, fearing trouble from me, for they know I escaped the death marked out for me by the chap named Fletcher, will go slow. I think they will keep me under watch for a while to see if I do anything."

"I should think it would strike them that if you knew anything about their plans you would have gone to the Jersey City police as soon as you escaped and reported the whole matter. The fact that you did not do so ought to disarm their suspicion."

"I did not do it for the reason I have explained, that I felt I could make no case against them that would hold water in court. Even Fletcher would escape punishment for trying to burn me up, for he would deny that he made such an attempt and I could not prove that he did."

"I see, but I think you made a mistake by not going to the police and making your charge against Fletcher. That would seem what anybody would have done under the circumstances. You ~~should~~ have said a word about the insurance plan. You could have told a plain story of being taken hired by a man on the ferryboat to carry a package to the old house. That you delivered the package, and on leaving the place you became confused in the fog, stumbled over the cellar door, which gave way under you and dropped you into the cellar. Somewhat dazed by the shock, instead of walking out through the broken cellar door, you went up through the house, hardly knowing what you were doing, and was trying to make your way out of the building when you were captured by the two men, locked up in the closet and there left to your fate."

"A charge of attempted murder and arson would have been entered against the unknown men, and detectives would have been sent out to try and find them on the description of their personal appearance furnished by you. All this would have been printed in the papers, the rascals would have read it, and as not a word was said about the insurance business, they would have revised their suspicions against you and have feared that a mistake had been made in trying to get rid of you. The man you call Jim would probably have ventured to go ahead with his part of the scheme."

"Yes, sir, I think I ought to have done that. I had some idea at first of making a clean statement of everything to the police, but I was afraid I would be detained and subjected to all sorts of cross-examination until I could satisfy them as to my identity, and that my story was straight goods," said Joe.

"It is unfortunate that you do not know the name of the insurance company in the case," said

Mr. Drew. "Nor even the name of the man insured."

"There may be more than one company. As it's a game that can only be worked once in this neighborhood, and there are four men looking for a share of the money, I think it likely that the insured has taken out policies in several companies."

"That is not unlikely. I think I will send for one of the Wall Street detectives, place the case before him and see what he thinks ought to be done with the view of blocking the swindle and bringing the rascals to justice."

"Do whatever you think best, sir," said Joe.

Mr. Drew at once telephoned the Wall Street agency asking that one of their smartest men be sent to his office for consultation purposes. It was nearly four o'clock then, and about the best time the broker could give his attention to this outside matter. Joe walked outside to await the coming of the detective. He had nothing more to do that day, and he took up a Wall Street paper to entertain himself with. The cashier noticed him sitting at his post and supposed that Mr. Drew was detaining him to execute some special errand. Fifteen minutes passed and then the outer door opened and a sharp-looking man, in a smart business suit, came in. Joe went over to him.

"I have called to see Mr. Drew," said the caller.

"Are you from the Wall Street Agency?"

"Yes."

"Take a seat for a moment."

Joe went into the private room and told the broker that the detective was outside.

"Show him in and come in yourself," said Mr. Drew.

Joe ushered the sleuth inside.

"Sit down, Mr. ~~—~~," said the broker.

"Dolan," said the detective.

Mr. Drew then outlined the matter in hand.

"My boy will go over the whole story for your benefit. When you are in possession of the facts, I want your opinion on the case," said the broker.

Joe stepped forward and told his story exactly as the reader knows it. The sleuth did not interrupt him.

"Now, Mr. Dolan, what do you think should be done in this case?" said Mr. Drew.

"Are you interested in this case?" asked the detective.

"In no way except to forward the ends of justice and to prevent a fraud from being consummated."

"You have sent for me merely to ask my advice?"

"That's it. Whatever steps are taken in this matter must be taken by the authorities—the Jersey City police department—since whatever crime has so far been committed has taken place within the jurisdiction of that city and the State of New Jersey."

"Would it not have been better for you to have sent for a Jersey City detective?"

"Do you advise me to do that? It is for advice that we sent for you. As the matter stands there are no grounds, other than this boy's uncorroborated testimony, to proceed against those rascals. As the men know this boy has crossed the

death fixed for him, they are on their guard against any action he takes against them. They suspect, but do not positively know, that he has learned something about their plans. Doubtless they will hold back to see what he does. Up to this moment he has taken no action of any kind."

"Didn't he report the attempt made to burn him alive in the building?"

"He did not. In my opinion he ought to have done so at once," said the broker.

"He certainly should have done so," said the sleuth. "He need not have brought up the rest of the matter."

"What effect do you suppose his failure to do so will have on the minds of the men?"

"It is impossible to say. They may consider that he was so glad to get out of his perilous fix that he has let the matter go."

"He thinks they are watching his movements."

"It is quite likely they are."

"Well, what ought to be done to set the law in motion against them without drawing their attention to the fact?"

"If you wish the agency to take the case in hand we will find means to bring that about. The fact that a body was taken from the morgue is a very important clue to work on. The boy's story shows where it was taken to, and the presumed reason why it was taken to the burned house. As no further steps can be taken in the scheme until the remains are exhumed from the ruins and identified, a watch will have to be kept on the place until the body is brought to light. The man who identifies the remains will then be spotted. He will be closely shadowed, and in this way his accomplices are likely to be rounded up. By following this lead quietly the police ought then to have no trouble in learning what insurance company is involved, and then a little sharp work should result in the capture of the bunch and the complete exposure of the conspiracy."

"I dare say the insurance company will be glad to recompense me for whatever expense I voluntarily go to in this matter, so I will turn the case over to you, to act on as the agency thinks proper," said Mr. Drew.

"Very well. Give me a memorandum to that effect. As it is probable the Jersey City authorities will want to hear your boy's story from his own lips, he must hold himself in readiness to accompany me across the river when I call for him."

"I'll go with you," said Joe, "but you mustn't overlook the fact that my going may be spotted by the rascals."

"I could send him on some errand to a Jersey City broker as a blind," said Mr. Drew. "You could then have a cab waiting for him which could drive to Police Headquarters by a round-about route. That would throw them off the track."

The detective grinned. It was the plan he had intended to suggest.

"We will do that," he said, getting up. "I will go on back to the office and report to the chief."

As he started for the door, a man who had been crouching in the corridor outside the private room hurried off toward the elevator. If Joe had seen him, he would have said he looked something like the smartly dressed man he had

seen operating on the teeth of the corpse in the old house.

### CHAPTER VIII.—Trapped.

The following day was a busy one for Joe. He found time, however, to keep track of A. & C. stock, and it went up to 83. His tip was beginning to pan out. Around half-past twelve Mr. Drew got a phone message from the Wall Street agency. He was directed to send Joe to Jersey City that afternoon at half-past three o'clock.

"Notify this office when the boy starts, and the exact route he will take to the ferry. We will attend to the rest," said the voice.

Mr. Drew said he would do so. When Joe came in the cashier said the boss wanted to see him, so he went into the private room.

"I have received a message from the detective agency requesting me to send you to Jersey City to-day. You will start after you come from the bank, around three. I will have a letter for you to take to Zolliver & Co. You will get a reply, but that amounts to nothing. The letter is merely an excuse, you understand."

"Yes, sir."

"The cab will meet you there, though I was not so informed. The agency wishes to know the route you will take, from which I judge you will be followed and watched by Detective Dolan, who, of course, has his plans all laid. I suppose you will walk up to Broadway, thence up that street to Cortlandt, and down Cortlandt to the ferry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Keep on this side of Broadway till you come opposite Cortlandt, then cross."

"All right, sir."

"Your route on the other side has not been asked for, so I am sure you will be under the eye of the detective, who will have the cab following, probably. That is all. Report to me when you come from the bank, and if there is any change in the arrangements I will let you know them."

"Yes, sir," said Joe, who then left the room.

At three o'clock A. & C. closed at 83 3-8. Ten minutes after three Joe got back from the bank and reported to Mr. Drew. The broker had a letter ready for him to take to Zolliver & Co., a firm of Jersey City traders, with whom Mr. Drew occasionally did business.

"You will start at once, Joe," he said. "Just wait till I call up the agency."

At that moment his phone rang.

"Well?" said Mr. Drew.

"When does your boy start for Jersey City?"

"He is leaving the office now," returned the broker.

"Where is he going on the other side?"

Mr. Drew mentioned the place.

"When he leaves he will find a cab standing outside the door with an officer in it. Let him get in and he will be taken to Police Headquarters."

The speaker rang off, and when Mr. Drew told Joe what the man at the agency said, the boy left the office and started for the ferry. Mr. Drew put on his hat and went to a restaurant for a light lunch. Ten minutes later Detective

Dolan entered the office. Not seeing Joe, he went to the cashier's window.

"Is Mr. Drew in?" he inquired.

"Just went out, sir. He will return inside of half an hour."

"Where is your young messenger?"

"Gone on an errand for Mr. Drew."

"When will he be back?"

"I couldn't say whether he'll be back or not, for it's near time for him to quit for the day."

The detective looked disappointed.

"I want to see him on important business," he said.

"You had better wait a while and see if he comes back."

"Do you know where Mr. Drew went?"

"I think he went to the Empire Cafe on Broad street."

"I know the place. Tell the boy that Mr. Dolan called and will be back. He must wait."

"I'll tell him," said the cashier, and the sleuth started for the Empire Cafe.

He found Mr. Drew standing at the lunch counter with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of ale in the other, talking to a friend who was also eating and drinking.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Drew, but I want to see you aside for a moment," said the detective.

The broker was surprised to see the detective, whom he recognized, for he supposed the officer was following Joe to Jersey City.

"I was over to your office," said the sleuth, "and your cashier told me I would probably find you here. I came to tell you that the chief of the Jersey City police wants to see your messenger this afternoon between four and five."

"Between four and five! Why, in accordance with an arrangement made by the agency, he started for Jersey City fifteen minutes ago."

"Your boy did!" ejaculated the detective, in surprise. "What do you mean by an arrangement with the agency? I have just come from there after getting back from Jersey City. The agency has made no arrangement with you, other than what was between us in your private room yesterday afternoon."

The broker stared at Dolan.

"I received a message over the phone from the agency about noon, informing me that my boy would be required in Jersey City that afternoon at half-past three o'clock. I was directed to notify the agency when he started, and the route he would take to the ferry. At a quarter past three the agency called me up and asked when the boy would start. I replied right away. I was asked where he was going on the other side and I gave the information—Zolliver & Co., mining brokers. I was then told that a cab would be waiting for him outside that office into which he must step, when he would be taken to Police Headquarters."

"There is something wrong," said the detective. "You couldn't have got a message at noon from the agency telling you that the boy was wanted in Jersey City this afternoon, for the chief of police was not at Headquarters before half-past one to-day, at which time I had my interview with him in connection with the case, and was then directed to fetch him over to tell his story. I was at the agency talking with my chief at the time you say you were called up the second

time, and I know we had no communication with your office at all. We never use the telephone when we can avoid it. It is evident that the conspirators in this matter have taken this means to capture the boy in order to find out, if they can force the admission from him, just what he knows. I must make an effort to head them off, though they have half an hour's start of me. What is Zolliver & Co.'s address?"

Mr. Drew, somewhat startled at the turn events had taken, gave it, and Dolan got out of the cafe in a hurry. He jumped into a waiting cab and directed the driver to take him to the Cortlandt street ferry in record time. In the meantime Joe went on, unconscious that he was walking into a trap. He caught a boat that was on the point of starting across the river, and in due time reached Zolliver & Co.'s office, where he delivered his note. He was detained there fifteen minutes for the answer, and when he left he found a cab standing outside. He went to the door of it and, looking in, saw a bearded man.

"Are you waiting for somebody?" he asked.

"Is your name Joe Sturgess?" asked the man.

"Yes."

"Jump in, then. I have orders to take you to the house of the chief of police. Your employer received a message to that effect by telephone."

"I thought it was Police Headquarters," said Joe, taking a seat beside the man as the cab started off.

"That arrangement was changed at the last moment," replied the man.

"All right," said Joe; "it's all the same to me."

The boy found it was quite a ride he was taking.

"How much farther have we to go?" he asked.

"Not far," said the man. "Another block."

In a few minutes the cab stopped before a private house.

"Here we are," said the man, opening the door and stepping out.

Joe followed, and as he did so he took notice, in a casual way, of the number on the cab's lamp. It was 137. As they mounted the step to the front door, the vehicle drove off. The bearded man pulled the bell. The door opened presently and Joe was led into a bare hallway such as one might expect to find in a vacant house. The singularity of this fact could not but make an impression on the boy, but before he had time to give it much consideration he received a blow from behind that stretched him senseless on the boards. When he recovered his senses an hour later he found himself bound to a post in some gloomy place that had all the appearance of a cellar.

A rag was bound around his mouth as a gag. Then he realized that he was the victim of some sharp piece of work, and he easily guessed who were at the bottom of the outrage.

"I've been trapped," he thought, "but hang me if I can see how it could have been worked. It shows what a clever bunch those insurance rascals are. I wonder what they expect to gain by this thing? They must have been watching me all the time, followed me to the ferry, suspected my errand across the river, and laid their plans to nab me. Well, I appear to be up against it."

I suppose they will turn up soon and have it out with me."

His supposition proved right, for a man presently appeared. In spite of the obscurity of the place, Joe recognized him right away as Fletcher. The newcomer lit a piece of candle and held it up before the boy's face.

"You know me, I suppose?" he said, after removing the cloth from Joe's mouth.

"I do," answered the boy.

"How did you escape from the house?"

"That needn't worry you," said Joe.

"It doesn't worry me. I'm curious to know, for I didn't think you could make your escape from that closet."

"I'm not saying how I got away."

"All right. It's a matter of no importance. You did escape or you wouldn't be here now. I have a few questions to ask you."

"I'll answer them if they're the right kind of questions."

"Why did you enter the house after you delivered that package to me?"

"I told you at the house when you questioned me—because I couldn't help myself."

"You said you tripped over the cellar flaps in the fog and they gave way, dropping you into the cellar."

"That's the truth."

"Very good. When you found you were not hurt, why didn't you leave the house the way you got in and go about your business?"

"I was kind of dazed," said Joe, recalling Mr. Drew's way of putting it, "and instead of walking out, I stumbled upstairs."

"Exactly. You found your way to a certain door and listened to what you heard inside."

"What's the use of questioning me if you are supplying your own answers?"

"Because I have made a good guess, haven't I?"

"I think you are making a bad guess."

"Then you deny that you tried to spy on what was transpiring in that room?"

"What reason could I have had to spy on you when I was trying to get out of the house?"

"A boy is always curious to see what he can see."

"After the tumble I had I wasn't in any condition to be curious about anything. I don't know how I escaped breaking my neck."

"Then you don't know anything about what we were doing in that room?"

"If it was anything crooked, I'd have told the police long before this."

"I notice you haven't told the police that I locked you in that closet and left you to burn up."

"I'd have done it if I could have proved it against you. I don't even know who you are. Still the police might have caught you; but what good would it have done me to have pushed the charge? You would swear you didn't do it, and your word would be as good as mine in court."

Fletcher grinned.

"That's right," he said. "You couldn't prove a thing either."

"Why was I brought to this house?"

"I wanted to have a talk with you."

"You've had it, so I hope you'll let me go."

"If I tell you, you've told the truth, I would."

"I've told the truth."

"There was a detective in your office yesterday afternoon talking to you and your boss."

"How came you to know that?"

"Never mind. I know it. What was he there for?"

"You'll have to ask my employer. He sent for him."

"As you were present, I'm asking you."

"I never give my employer's business away."

"Unless you answer my question, you will remain in this cellar until I return, to-morrow morning."

"I can't disclose my employer's business."

"I am not interested in your employer's business. I want to know why that detective was consulting with you and your boss?"

"I can't tell you."

"Then here you stay till you do tell me."

With that, Fletcher put out the light and left the cellar.

#### CHAPTER IX.—How Joe Escaped.

The cellar was now quite dark, for the day was waning fast, and the small, barred windows in the top of the rear wall, on a level with the paving of the yard, admitted scarcely any light. Fletcher, on taking his departure, did not put the gag over Joe's mouth again. It was a matter of little importance, for the loudest shout that the boy could utter would not have reached any one's ears. The house was a vacant one, and the two buildings on either side of it were likewise unoccupied. Had any one come into the yard, they might have heard him if he happened to yell, but nobody came into the yard, unless it was a bunch of boys skylarking around all the yards in the block.

So Joe's chances of remaining a prisoner until released by Fletcher or another member of his crowd was pretty good. The unexpected is what often plays a very important part in the affairs of life, and it was the unexpected that led to the Wall Street boy's release. Two youths, of lax morals, anxious to raise the wind, got into the house by way of the broken area iron gate, and an imitation jimmy they used to force the basement door. Joe heard their footsteps on the bare boards above, and the light tread indicated the presence of boys. He wondered if they had been sent there to watch over him. They made their way to the kitchen and proceeded to detach the brass cocks and sundry other bits of metal from the plumbing. This work took them some time, for they did the business mostly in the dark to avoid discovery.

When they had cleaned the kitchen out, they went upstairs to the bathroom and demoralized that room. With a bag half full of plunder they came downstairs again and were going away when one of them suggested that they might find something more of value to them in the cellar, so down in the cellar they went. A bit of candle lighted their way, and Joe heard their footsteps and saw the glimmer of light approaching him. Joe saw them passing around, observed the bag over the shoulders of one, and guessed what they were up to. Finally they came near him. He had refrained from calling to them, because he was afraid they'd take to their heels the mo-

ment they heard his voice, which was the most likely thing they would do. The chap with the candle suddenly made out Joe standing against the post. With a yell of alarm he dropped the candle and ran, calling to his companion to follow.

"Wot's de matter wit' yer?" asked the other, not understanding the cause of his pal's alarm. The other made no answer, but kept on upstairs, reached the door and running out through the area, skedaddled down the street.

"Dat Mulligan makes me tired," said the other, coming forward and picking up the bit of candle. "He's dat nervous he'd shy at his own shadder."

Then Joe, feeling it was his last chance, ventured to speak.

"Say, pard, cut me loose, will you?" he said.

The boy started as though he had been shot, dropped the bag of plunder and started to run.

"Hold on, kid; help me, won't you?" said Joe, calling after him.

The boy stopped and looked back. No one was coming after him.

"Don't run away, kid. I'm tied up here. Come back and cut me loose," said Joe.

"Wot's dat? Youse tied up. Wot are yer tied for?" said the boy.

"A couple of fellows ran me in here and tied me to a post to keep me here."

"Wot did dey want to keep yer here for?"

"To get back at me."

"Wot for?"

"Because I know too much about them."

The boy gradually came back, holding up the light, and he soon saw that Joe was tied, hand and legs, to the post.

"Yer in a nice fix," he said, with a grin. "Wot'll yer give me if I let yer loose?"

"If those chaps didn't take my money, I'll give you a dollar."

"Have yer got a dollar?"

"Release my hands and I'll see if I have."

"Yer promise to give it to me if yer have?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe yer got no dollar."

"Cut my hands free, anyway."

"I'll do dat, seein' yer in such a fix," said the youth. "Got a knife in yer pocket?"

"Yes."

"Which pocket?"

"The right one."

The boy shoved his hand into Joe's pocket and pulled out the knife.

"Dat's a fine one. Guess I'll keep it. So long!"

"Hold on! Are you going to go back on me that way?" cried Joe apprehensively.

"I've made a knife. If I cut yer loose yer'll take it away from me."

"No, I won't. You can keep the knife if you want it. I can get another one."

"Yer say dat jest to fool me."

"Not at all. I mean it."

The boy hesitated, then he came back and hacked at the line which held Joe's hands. As soon as Joe's hands were free the boy started off with his bundle, leaving the candle burning on the floor. Joe felt in his vest pocket and found his small roll of bills.

"Hold on, kid! I've got a dollar. You can

have it with the knife if you finish the job," he said.

"Nixy. You just want to get hold of me."

"Hand me back the knife and I'll give you the dollar. Come and look at it."

The temptation brought the tough youth back to see if Joe really had a dollar. He saw that he held a bill in his fingers.

"All right, cully. Give me de dollar and I'll give yer back de knife," he said.

"All right. I'll trust you. There's the dollar," and Joe tossed it at the boy.

The lad picked it up and looked at it close to the candle. He saw it was a dollar, all right.

"Here's yer knife."

"Cut the rest of the cords and you can keep it, too."

"Why don't you cut dem yerself?"

"I can do it with the knife, but as you want it, and I don't care for it, for I'll be glad to get out of here, I'll give you the chance to earn it."

The youth concluded to risk it. He cut the rest of the cords.

"Dere yer are," he said.

"Thanks. You're a brick, kid."

"I keep de knife and de dollar?"

"Yes."

"Ye're all right. Glad I helped yer," said the boy, satisfied all was right.

Joe was careful not to ask his rescuer what he was doing in the house. They left the cellar together.

"Yer scared de duff out of me friend Mulligan," grinned the kid.

"I don't wonder. Wasn't you frightened at first, too?"

"Mebbe I wuz. I t'ought yer wuz a ghost when I seed yer."

"I'm a pretty healthy-looking ghost, and a hungry one just now. I wonder what time it is?"

"I reckon dat it's about seven. Where do yer live?"

"In Harlem, New York."

"Hully gee! Dat's a long ways from here," said the kid, as they made their exit by the area door and gate.

"I'm not acquainted with this locality. How far is it from the ferry?"

"More dan a mile. Turn down dat street and walk till yer strike a car. Dat's de quickest way to de ferry."

"It will be after eight when I get home."

"I bet yer it will, but de elevated'll take yer up fast on de udder side."

"Where do you live?"

"Me? Oh, I live wit' me mudder t'ree or four blocks from here, up an alley."

"What's yer name?"

"What do you want to know it for?" asked the youth, suspiciously.

"To remember you by."

"Wot yer want to remember me for?"

"Because you have done me a good turn and I appreciate it."

"Yer paid me for it."

I havey't paid you half enough. Here's another dollar."

"Hully smoke! Yer must be made of money. I'd like to meet yer every day," said the kid, noways backward in grabbing the second dollar. "Do yer make dese t'ings?"

"Yes. I make them in Wall Street."

"Wot! Do yer work in Wall Street?"

"I do. I'm a broker's messenger."

"Is dat a fact? How in t'under did yer come to be put in dat cellar?"

"I was put there by a gang of rascals who want to keep me out of their way."

"Wot for?"

"Reasons that I can't tell you."

"I s'pose yer goin' to put the police on to them?"

"The police are on to them already."

"Gosh! I never heard anyt'in' like dis, 'cept in de papers. Don't tell de cops dat you seed me and Mulligan in dat house."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Not'in', but me and de cops don't hitch."

"You haven't told me your name."

"But dey'd get on to me t'rough Mulligan."

"Tell me your name and I promise to keep it quiet."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes."

"Me name is Dinny Haley."

"Thanks. I won't give you away. Well, good-by, I must get on."

"Good-by, boss. T'anks for de two bucks and de knife. I'll 'member youse in me dreams."

And so they parted.

#### CHAPTER X.—Joe Buys a Bunch of Mining Certificates.

Joe reached a car bound for the ferry and boarded it, but he did not intend to go there direct. His purpose was to stop at Police Headquarters. Fletcher was bound to be back looking for him, and he had taken the precaution to secure the number of the house and the name of the street so as to put the police on to the place. He thought they ought easily catch the rascal when he returned. He inquired his way to the station house, and finally got there.

"I want to see the chief, or his deputy, or somebody in authority here," he said.

"Your name and business, young man," asked the officer who met him.

"My name is Joe Sturgess. I live in New York and work for Nathaniel Drew, a Wall Street stock broker," replied Joe.

"I think you are very much wanted here. Detective Dolan, of the Wall Street agency, was going to fetch you here this afternoon. He turned up and said you had been enticed over here by the rascals whom you accuse of a grave crime, and carried off somewhere by them. Half a dozen men are now out looking for you."

"I was enticed over by them and trapped, but I have just made my escape from the cellar of a house where they tied me up. One of the men will be back to-night or in the morning to give me further attention. That is your chance to catch him. With one of the men locked up, you ought to be able to get the others," said Joe.

He was taken into the office of the deputy chief, to whom he told his story of the events of the foggy night, and his added adventure that afternoon. After being detained and questioned for over an hour he was permitted to go. It was

half-past nine that evening when he finally reached home. Next morning he had quite an interesting story to relate to Mr. Drew. Detective Dolan was sent for and heard his story, too. Subsequently word was received from Jersey City that Fletcher had been caught. Joe was directed to come over and identify him, which he did. The rascal was brought before a magistrate and remanded under heavy bail. Strenuous efforts were put forth to catch the others involved in the conspiracy, but without success.

No effort was made to search the ruins for the remains of the corpse, but the place was put under watch. The leading insurance companies of New York were quietly advised to keep an eye on any claim made for insurance on the body of a man who was reported as having been burned to death—a man whose identity was to be largely established by means of the filling in two front teeth. In the meantime A. & C. stock took a boom on and went clear up and beyond par. Joe sold out at 98 and cleared a profit of \$900, ten per cent. of which he faithfully turned over to Dick Singleton. Hardly had the boom ceased to interest Wall Street when another started up in L. & M., and Joe got in on 140 shares at 92.

During the run of this one nothing was heard from the insurance swindlers, and Joe added \$2,100 to his private pile. As if luck was determined to smile on him in chunks, he found a roll of bills in the street which counted up \$2,500. This roll lay close to the gutter, and from the looks of the yellow boy on the outside it had been stepped upon by horse and man and smashed down by the wheels of more than one vehicle. All this time it was in plain sight almost of unnumbered pedestrians and scurrying messenger boys, and within reach of many bootblacks and newsboys. How long it had been kicking around the spot it was impossible to say, but evidently several hours. It was Joe's luck to be the person to pick it up, and as the chance of finding its rightful owner was pretty slim, he added it to his pile, which now footed up to the cheerful little sum of \$6,000.

Mr. Drew paid the detective agency for Dolan's services and charged it up to profit and loss, his only recompense being the thought that he had probably stopped the insurance swindle even if three of the principals had escaped detection. Fletcher was finally tried for being concerned in the abduction of Joe from in front of Zoliver & Co.'s office. To this was tacked the charge of attempting to put Joe out of the way in the old house on the night of the fire. Not a word about the insurance matter was mentioned. The police still hoped to trick the conspirators into believing they were safe from exposure. During all this time check 765 lay in its envelope in Broker Drew's big safe. Joe had taken it out once and written to the Goldfield National Bank concerning it, but for some reason he got no reply.

Whether his letter miscarried, which did not strike him as likely, or the bank did not regard it as a matter of sufficient importance to take up, which was more probable, the boy couldn't say. In any case, the unfortunate man who had brought the cancelled check East, sewn up in his trouser's lining, as if it was of some importance, which could not very well be, as the money had been paid out on it, had not yet found his way

to the Potter's Field, for what little remained of him still reposed in the ruins of the burned house and seemed likely to stay there for a while longer, as the owner of the property, being involved in litigation with another claimant, was unable to collect the small insurance policy, which was, instead, paid into court.

About this time Joe took the envelope containing the check out of the safe and took it home with him to show his mother and sisters, who had expressed some curiosity to see it, though as it had been taken from the body of a dead man it might have been regarded as a gruesome exhibit. The girls looked at it with interest, but did not care to handle it, and when Joe took it to his room he put it, envelope and all, in his trunk. Some days afterward, while looking over a Western mining paper, he noticed an advertisement of a man named James Hawley who wanted a partner to help him take over a mining property, called the Golden Argosy. Joe remembered having seen something about a Golden Argosy mine in a scrapbook which lay on the top of Mr. Drew's safe, in which it was his duty to paste such clippings of a mining nature from time to time as the broker handed him for that purpose. It was indexed so that anything in the book could readily be found at a moment's notice.

Joe got the book, consulted the index and turned to the page in which the Golden Argosy mine was pasted. The clipping began by stating that the Golden Argosy, of which great things had been expected, had pestered out completely and was now relegated to the category of dead mines, the only real mourners being the people who had purchased half a million shares of the stock at prices from 5 cents to 25 cents. Then followed the history of the mine. A golden ledge of seemingly fabulous value had been discovered by a prospector named William Smith. He had had no difficulty in enlisting capital to develop the property, and the Golden Argosy Mining Co. was incorporated under the laws of Nevada. Everything went on swimmingly for a little while, when the golden ledge suddenly disappeared. Further operations to find it developed one of a much lower grade. Things looking unsatisfactory, the company began putting its stock on the market to raise money.

After other 700,000 shares were issued, over 160,000 of which were sold in the East, and then the public ceased to bite. It was about this time they did, for the mine had been going from bad to worse, and its prospects amounted to nothing. Six months later the clipping appeared announcing that the promoters had given up the work and wanted to sell at any old price. The clipping was eighteen months old, and Joe had no means of learning what had taken place since with respect to it. The advertisement in the Western paper showed that James Hawley had become interested in the property and wanted some financial aid to acquire possession of it, presumably for the purpose of trying his luck in the dead mine. That day, while hunting for something in the boss's closet, Joe came upon a dust-covered package marked "Golden Argosy stock." He asked Mr. Drew about it.

"A customer left those certificates with me for sale a year or more ago, but I couldn't find a buyer, for the mine was a dead proposition. I

asked the owner to take them away, but he never did, and they've been there since."

Joe told him about the advertisement, and remarked that the mine might amount to something yet.

"Not one chance in a thousand," replied the broker. "Dead mines seldom come to life again."

"How many shares in that package?"

"Ten thousand."

"I'll give you \$10 for the stock."

"No, Joe, it would be \$10 thrown away on your part."

"I can afford to throw the money away on a long chance."

"If you are really anxious to get them you can have them for the money, but they are really not worth that sum."

So Joe paid the money and took the package, which he carried home with him that afternoon. It wasn't because he really had any idea that the Golden Argosy mine would ever amount to anything that he bought the stock, but because \$10 didn't cut much of a figure with him, and the impulse to acquire the certificates was irresistible. He opened the package when he got home and found that the certificates were made out in the name of Henry Baker. He took out one of them and tacked it up on his wall. He rewrapped the others, and put the bundle in his pocket.

## CHAPTER XI.—The Strange Corpse in Wall Street.

It wasn't long that Joe looked over the personal advertisements in the evening daily that he was received a hearing in the advertisements of that kind then. There were a dozen put together, but nothing induced him to stop and listen, and one of them attracted his attention. It ran as follows:

"One hundred dollars will be paid to the person furnishing information that will lead to the discovery of the whereabouts of William Smith, of Goldfield, Nevada, who arrived in this city on May 27, registered at the Astor House, and two days later disappeared mysteriously. This followed a personal description of Smith: Age, 30; or 32; brown hair; height, 5 feet 7 inches; No. — Broad street."

The points that attracted Joe in the advertisement were: First, the name, which he recurred to that of the prospector who made the initial discovery of gold ore in the Golden Argosy property; second, the fact that Smith came from Goldfield, and that he disappeared on the day that Joe had his encounter with the two other schemers, who had obtained the corpse of a stranger, evidently from Goldfield by reason of the check on the Goldfield National Bank found by Fletcher on his person, who had dropped dead that day in Jersey City; third, the description of Smith, which seemed to correspond in a general way with the corpse Joe saw stretched out on the table in the room of the old house by the river; and, lastly, the fact that Baker No. 1 was interested in securing information about the missing man.

"I guess I could make that \$100," thought Joe, "but as it might interfere with the efforts of the police to catch the insurance swindlers, I won't try for it. I don't care enough about Mr. Nostrand to oblige him, anyway. I'm willing to bet that the corpse in the case is William Smith. I'll examine the signature on the check to-night with the aid of a magnifying glass and see if it bears any resemblance to William Smith. If it does, why, maybe I'll claim the reward later on when the police have caught the swindlers or given up the case."

That morning he accidentally discovered that a syndicate had been formed to corner and boom L. & D. shares. This was too good a thing to let get by him, so he went to the little bank and bought, on margin, 500 shares of L. & D. at 115. After supper he put the check under the magnifying glass. The writing was such a scrawl that but for the fact that he expected it stood for William Smith he never could have told that it was. He finally came to the conclusion that it was Smith, though he could not have been willing to swear to it. He held the check close up to the flame of the gas jet, and while he was looking at it a curious change came over the paper. An oblong diagram came out on the back of the check. About it appeared the words, "Golden Argosy." Near one end showed a small square with the word, "Shaft." From that ran a line with numerous branches. The line was marked, "Main tunnel," the branches, "Offshoots A, B, C," etc.

An inch from "Offshoot D" was a small cross marked "the lost ledge—twelve feet." A cross with the four cardinal points of the compass showed the bearings of the small cross from the end of "Offshoot D." Joe gazed spellbound at the strange discovery he had made, and as he gazed the diagram gradually faded out until the back of the check resumed its ordinary appearance.

"Jumping grasshoppers!" he exclaimed. "What have I struck?"

Once more he held the check up to the heat of the gas and the diagram came out as plainly as before.

"There's something in this discovery of mine," he said. "That diagram wasn't sketched out in invisible ink for nothing. It refers to the Golden Argosy mine, and tips off the spot where the continuation of the rich ledge that disappeared begins again. According to the statement written down, it is twelve feet in a northeasterly direction from the end of branch tunnel D. Smith, who was a prospector, doubtless made this discovery as he made the original one, and made it lately—that is, within a short time of his coming East. No wonder he was careful with this seemingly worthless cancelled check, and sewed it up in his clothes so he wouldn't lose it. I wonder what brought him East? To raise money to develop the new ledge? If that is so, how about this James Hawley, who advertised for a partner to help him buy up the control of the mining property? And how comes it that Broker Nostrand is desirous to find out what has become of William Smith and where he is? Smith must have called on him as soon as he reached this city and maybe tried to interest him in the mine."

Joe was smart enough to see that he had come

in possession of a valuable tip that might lead to his fortune.

"It's the strangest tip that ever happened in Wall Street, though I did get hold of it over in New Jersey, for it's directly connected with Wall Street," he said.

He determined to take the check down to the officer next day and show it to Mr. Drew. This he did, but when the broker failed to appear at the office at his customary time, Joe asked the cashier if he was coming to the city that day.

"No, he won't be here to-day, nor, in fact, for several days. He went to Chicago by the eight o'clock express."

"Is that so?" said Joe. "All right."

That afternoon about two he met Dick at the entrance to the building. While he was talking to him, Broker Nostrand came along and stopped to talk with an acquaintance.

"Say, Dick," said Joe suddenly, "I'll bet you never saw a Goldfield bank check."

"No. Have you seen one?"

"Yes, I've got a cancelled one in my pocket."

"Let's see it," said Dick.

Joe took the envelope out of his pocket and showed Dick the check.

"It was drawn on the Goldfield National Bank for the insignificant sum of \$10."

"How did you get hold of it?"

"Oh, by accident."

"What are you keeping it for? It's no good. It's been paid."

"I'm keeping it as a curiosity."

"The signature on it is a curiosity. I never saw such an unintelligible one in my life. Just like two wavy lines."

"Can you make it out?"

"Not if my life depended on it. I'll bet you can't read it, either."

"What will you bet?"

"I won't bet, for you may know the man who wrote it; but I'll gamble on it if I had the check and showed it to you offhand, as you are showing it to me, you couldn't decipher it," said Dick.

"I won't deny that. I've examined the name under a microscope, but I couldn't swear to what it stands for even at that. I only had an idea that I know what the name is."

"Well, what do you think the name is?"

"William Smith," answered Joe.

As he spoke, Nostrand, who had been listening to their conversation, uttered an ejaculation.

"Well, I must get on. So-long!" and Dick rushed away.

As Joe started for the elevator the broker stepped toward him.

"Ha! Where did you get that check?" cried Nostrand, seizing hold of the boy. "Give it to me. It is mine!"

"No, it is not yours, and you shan't have it!" replied Joe.

The struggle that ensued attracted a policeman.

"What's the trouble?" asked the officer.

"This boy has a check that belongs to me," said Nostrand, "and I want it."

"This check does not belong to him. His name is Howard Nostrand. You can see for yourself, officer, that no such name is on the check, and, furthermore, that it is not a New York check. It was drawn on the Goldfield National Bank, of

Goldfield, Nevada, to the order of Self, and the money was collected by the man himself, for it is stamped paid, and is no longer of any value to anybody," said Joe.

The policeman saw all that Joe pointed out. "How came you to get that check?" he asked Joe.

"I see no reason to make any explanation on the subject. It belongs to me, and I propose to hold on to it."

"Why do you claim that check?" the policeman asked Nostrand.

"Because it belongs to a client of mine who has mysteriously disappeared."

The officer pricked up his ears at that.

"Do you suspect that he has met with foul play?"

"I think it more than likely. This check, although useless, I admit, was in his possession when he called at my office the day after his arrival in the city. He registered at the Astor House, and the following day he left the hotel and never returned. That was all of a month ago, and his valise is still at the hotel."

The policeman thought the matter was assuming too serious an aspect for him to attempt to settle, so he suggested that both parties go with him to the precinct station house and have it adjusted, if possible, by the captain. At that, Nostrand changed front.

"I prefer to settle this matter with the boy myself. He's messenger for a broker in this building I do business with sometimes. If he will accompany me to my office, I think the matter can be adjusted," he said, looking at Joe.

Ordinarily the boy would have refused to go with Nostrand, for he didn't like the man, but rather than have the case brought up before the captain of the precinct, with the prospect of going to court, he was willing to agree to the broker's suggestion.

"I will go with you," he said. "Very well. That takes the matter out of your hands, officer. Sorry that you lost your time over it," said Nostrand, slipping the policeman a \$5 bill.

The officer took the money and walked away, and Joe went with Nostrand to his office, the pair not exchanging a word till they got there.

## CHAPTER XII.—Joe Buys Control of the Golden Argosy.

"Sit down," said Nostrand, when they entered his private room.

Joe took a seat and the broker threw his hat on his desk and pushed up the cover, seating himself in his pivot chair.

"Now, then, young man, how came you to get ~~the check~~ of that check?" he asked.

"Why are you so anxious to know, Mr. Nostrand?"

"I am anxious to know, for I have a strong hunch that William Smith, a prospector from Goldfield, Nevada, who died on the 15th of March, are the day after he arrived in this city. I expected to do business with him for the purchase of a freighter with me for the following day, when he failed

to keep. As the business he had to transact was very important, I sent to the Astor House, where he had put up, and learned that he had gone out. To cut the matter short, Smith never returned to the hotel from that day to this, which is a very singular circumstance, and leads me to believe that something has happened to him.

"Being a stranger, he might have been enticed into some crooked saloon, drugged, robbed, and done away with. Now, the fact that you have that check in your possession shows that you must know something about the mystery of Smith's disappearance, otherwise I cannot see how you would have it. I want you to tell me all about it. I will make it worth your while. I have advertised in the papers for information that will lead to the present whereabouts of Smith, if he is alive. I offered to pay \$100 for that information. If you can throw any light on the subject, I will hand you that sum."

"I guess I can earn the money," said Joe.

"Good!" said Nostrand, in a tone of satisfaction. "Do you know where William Smith is?"

"I have an idea, if this check belonged to him."

"It did belong to him."

"Is that his name signed to it?"

"That's a matter of no importance. The check having been paid is as valueless as any piece of paper of its size."

"It would appear so. What do you want it for, then?"

"I don't want it except as a clue to Smith."

"All right. I am going to keep it for the same reason."

"But you said you had an idea where the man is."

"I have."

"He is alive, then?"

"I regret to say he is not."

"He is dead?" cried Nostrand, in a tone of intense disappointment.

"Very much so."

"How do you know?"

"I must decline to state how I happen to know that fact, but it is so."

"Why are you making a secret of it? Don't you know that if I should bring this matter to the attention of the police that you would be compelled to tell the truth, and any objection on your part to do so would cause suspicion to rest on you?"

"That doesn't worry me in the least."

Nostrand regarded him curiously.

"Why not?"

"Because I could easily satisfy the authorities about this Smith."

"Why do you decline to satisfy me, then? Don't you want to make the \$100?"

"I am not particular about it, though \$100 is not to be sneezed at."

"Look here, young man, I don't like your attitude in this matter."

"I am sorry, but I will say this much—if you can show any vital reasons why the present whereabouts of the remains of William Smith, if the remains are really his, which I am inclined to believe they are, from the fact of you recognizing this check, should be made known to you, call on the chief of the Jersey City po-

lice and state your case to him. He might be willing to enlighten you."

"Then Smith met with foul play in Jersey City?" said Nostrand.

"He did meet with foul play, but not in the way you suppose."

"You are still talking in riddles. Why are you making so much mystery of this matter?"

"Because the Jersey City police have an important case in hand in which the remains of Smith play a part, and it might defeat the ends of justice if I said anything about it to you. If you are not satisfied with this explanation, call on Mr. Drew and speak to him about the matter. He is in Chicago now, but will return in a few days."

"What does Mr. Drew know about this thing?" asked Nostrand, clearly much surprised.

"He knows all that I know about it, for I told him."

"If Smith or his remains, as you assert he is dead, is involved in some criminal case, how came you to be mixed up in it?"

"That is a matter I don't care to talk about other than to say that I came into it by accident. I am a witness and must hold my tongue on the outside. When the guilty parties have been caught, the story will be printed in the papers, and then you will find out all about it."

"You might have said this in the first place and then I'd have understood why you were so close. So William Smith is really dead?"

"A man, not yet identified, is dead, but as this check was on his person and you recognize it as having been in William Smith's possession when you saw him, the presumption is that the unidentified man is Smith," said Joe.

"Was he murdered and robbed?"

"He was not."

"How came he to meet death, then?"

"He dropped dead of heart disease in Jersey City."

"And how came his body to be mixed up in a criminal case?"

"That I may not say. It is a police secret."

"Which you are acquainted with?"

"Yes."

"Have you any objection to permitting me to examine that check?"

"As it is connected with the police case, it must not pass out of my hands."

"Why should you hold it? Why do not the police retain it?"

"I must decline to answer that question."

"Will you let me look at it in your hands?"

"I will if you promise not to touch it."

"I promise."

Joe took out Check 765 and held it close to the broker's eyes.

"Turn it over," he said, after a momentary inspection.

Joe did so. The only thing visible on the back besides the indorsement close to the top was the signature of the rascal Fletcher in lead pencil. Nostrand regarded it with critical attention, and then looked closely at the paper from one end to the other. If he had expected to find something to interest him, he was disappointed.

"I see the indorsement and that lead pencil signature," he said. "Is that the way the back of the check looked when you got it?"

"There has been no change or alteration made in it since I got it."

"Do you know the meaning of that name Fletcher on it?"

"I do."

"Do you know how it came to be on the check?"

"I do. I saw it written there by a man who is now in custody."

"Then you are holding that check as a piece of evidence against him?"

"Yes, and for another reason, which I won't explain."

Nostrand picked up a magnifying glass from his desk and went carefully over the back of the check. Joe offered no objection to his doing so, for he knew that the secret of Check 765 could not be brought to light that way. He alone knew how to get at it.

"That's all," said Nostrand, sitting back in his chair.

"What did you expect to find on that check that you examined it so closely?" asked Joe, innocently.

"Nothing—that is, not exactly. I had an idea that Smith had written something on it, and I was curious to find out what it was."

"If that indorsement is a fair specimen of his writing, you wouldn't have been able to have read anything he might have written," said Joe.

"I suppose not—I suppose not," said Nostrand. "Well, I won't detain you any longer."

"I'm glad to hear it. I'll have some trouble squaring myself with the cashier for staying out so long."

Nostrand dashed a few words off on a pad, signed it and handed it to Joe.

"Give that to the cashier," he said.

Joe looked at the writing when he got outside and found that Nostrand had written the following:

"I took your messenger to my office and detained him there for half an hour."

"HOWARD NOSTRAND."

During the next few days Joe, at every chance, dropped into some mining broker's office and inquired if the trader had any Golden Argosy stock lying around. In this way he picked up 30,000 shares for less than half a cent a share—the lot costing him about \$100, which, considering that the mine was regarded as worthless, was a big price for the stock, but, then, the brokers wanted something for the certificates, even if they knew they had no market value. By that time L. & D. had advanced to 122. On the day Mr. Drew returned from Chicago it went to 130. In the meantime Joe wrote to James Hawley, saying he had seen his advertisement in a Western newspaper, and asked what inducements were offered for the investment of a small amount of capital.

He did not state that he was a Wall Street messenger boy, and so Hawley, when he got his letter, supposed the writer was a man, and he wrote back that he had only a little money himself, but, being a prospector, he wanted to buy out the controlling interest of some mining property that could be got cheap, and had selected the Golden Argosy because the controlling owners had no further use for it and were willing

to sell their stock for a song—\$2,500 would take the whole thing, which comprised 260,000 shares of stock, the title deeds, machinery on the ground and all the visible property of the company.

"I can put up \$500," he wrote. "If you can raise \$2,000, and are willing to go in with me, I think we can make a living out of the property. There are 240,000 shares scattered about the country, half of which are in this vicinity. Most of them could be bought in later for next to nothing, and then we'd practically own the mine outright. Let me hear what you will do."

"Yours respectfully,  
JAMES HAWLEY."

Joe wrote back, inclosing a draft for \$100, and told Hawley to get a thirty-day option on the property at \$2,500.

"You may expect to see me with the money in about three weeks," he said. "Of course, if I'm to put up four times as much money as you do, I shall require a proportionate interest in the property. If this meets with your concurrence, you can have a contract drawn to that effect and we will sign it."

The day after he sent the letter off, L. & D. reached 135 and Joe sold out. His profit on this deal was \$10,000. Hawley wrote back that he agreed to anything his correspondent advanced, and said the contract would be drawn giving Joe a four-fifths interest in the controlling interest of the Golden Argosy property. That was satisfactory to Joe, and he notified Hawley to that effect. Within the time stated his vacation came around and he asked Mr. Drew for two weeks, as he had to go West on business.

He got it and started for Goldfield. Hawley met him at the station and was greatly surprised to find that his prospective partner was a boy.

"That needn't worry you, Mr. Hawley, as long as I have the money to put up. Besides, I'm a Wall Street boy, with three years' experience in New York's financial district. You will find that will count for something," said Joe.

So the business was put through, and the firm of Sturgess & Hawley took over the control of the Golden Argosy property for the sum of \$2,500.

### CHAPTER XIII.—Conclusion.

When the business was concluded, Joe invited Hawley to dine with him at his hotel. After the meal they went to Joe's room to talk matters over. Hawley outlined his plans and Joe listened to them.

"Your plans are all right, Mr. Hawley, but if you follow them, I'm afraid our enterprise would hardly pan out," said Joe.

"How so?" replied the prospector, looking at him in surprise.

"Because you are going at the thing blind."

"I am going at it in the only way that my experience as a prospector suggests. The only way to find gold ore is to hunt for it," he said.

"I know that, but if I could show you a better way, wouldn't you be willing to adopt it?"

"Of course; but I don't see how—"

"Quite natural. You don't see how a boy who knows nothing about mining, and has never before been within hailing distance of mining property, can show you, an experienced prospector, how to make a ten strike."

"I admit I do not."

"Well, Mr. Hawley, if I hadn't seen your advertisement I should have bought the Golden Argosy myself."

"You astonish me."

"I have no doubt of it, but I intend to astonish you still more before I am done. Before I corresponded with you at all, I had evidence that the Golden Argosy property was a winner."

"What evidence?"

"A tip that came into my hands in the strangest way in the world. Now that you are my partner, I will tell you the story, but, of course, you will keep it strictly to yourself."

Joe then told him all about his experience with the insurance swindlers, the lost ledge, and about Check 765, without stating anything about the tip.

"You had a great experience, Sturgess, but you have not mentioned the tip."

"Here it is," said Joe, showing the check.

"Why, that is one of Bill Smith's cancelled checks. How came you to get it?"

"William Smith was the corpse I told you about."

"You don't say! Poor Bill! I knew him well. He originally discovered the gold in the Golden Argosy, but the ledge petered out and the whole thing went up the spout. I believe that ledge is still to be found somewhere on the property, as I have told you, and that was my object in getting a partner to help me make further developments."

"I know," said Joe. "Well, you don't have to go hunting for that ledge. I can put my finger right on it."

Joe got up and wrapped the check around the electric light bulb, for Goldfield lights its streets and principal buildings with electricity, the same as any other modern city. There is not a great deal of heat thrown off by a small bulb, but there was enough, by giving it time, to bring the diagram of the mine out on the back of the check. Then Joe showed it to his mining partner, and before it had faded away the prospector had all the details in his mind.

"If that tip proves to be the real thing, there will be a fortune instead of a living in the mine for both of us, but chiefly for you. You must buy up all the outstanding stock you can find, and then when the discovery becomes known there will be only a few outsiders to participate in the cutting of the melon," said Hawley.

"I'll attend to that right away. I have plenty of money to do it with, and enough to put into the working of the mine without putting up any stock for sale."

They talked till Joe said it was time for him to turn in, and then they parted for the night. The next day, after another interview, Hawley went to the property to begin private work to open up the lost ledge, while Joe went around to a broker and gave him an order to buy up every

share of the Golden Argosy he could find at the lowest price. In a few days the broker turned over to him about 100,000 shares. That made 140,000 shares he had bought in of the 240,000 outstanding.

The books showed that fully 60,000 more were held in the East, and the balance in different parts of the West. At the end of the week Hawley found the ledge at the point indicated, and he and Joe held a jollification over the fruition of their hopes. Nothing further was to be done until all the stock had been bought that could be obtained. Joe sent in his resignation to Mr. Drew and told him he would explain the reason when he got back to New York. Fifteen thousand more shares were picked up in Denver, Kansas City, and other places, then Joe started East. When he arrived home he was joyfully received by his folks. He had written them all about his success with the Golden Argosy mine.

He called on his late boss and told him everything. Needless to say that Mr. Drew was amazed to find that his messenger had blossomed out into a real mine owner, and of a property that promised great results. Joe at once opened an office in the same building, and put the name of his mine on the door. He went around among the mining brokers and secured 35,000 shares more at a mere bagatelle. That left only 50,000 shares out, and Joe made no further effort to hunt these up. Of the 450,000 shares purchased, which included the 260,000 controlling interest first bought, Joe kept 300,000 and gave Hawley 150,000. That gave him a three-fifths interest in the whole mine; Hawley a three-tenths interest, or half as much as Joe, and left one-fifth divided among a large number of small, scattered stockholders. The company was reorganized, with Joe as president, Hawley as vice-president and general manager, and a Goldfield man as secretary-treasurer.

Dick Singleton was presented with ten shares of stock and elected a director. Mr. Drew also accepted ten shares and consented to act as a director. Dick resigned as messenger and went to work as Joe's general assistant in the Wall Street office, and was in full charge of same when Joe was out of the city. While these things were under way, and before the announcement was made public that the lost ledge in the Golden Argosy had been found, the police rounded up the insurance swindlers. The man Jim, whose other name was Barron, waited two months before making a move to collect the four insurance policies for \$10,000 each he held on the life of the insured, who proved to be his brother-in-law. Then, believing that everything was safe, he had the remains of the corpse dug out of the ruins and carried to his house.

He notified the four insurance companies to identify the skeleton of his alleged brother-in-law. They each sent a representative, who viewed all that was left of William Smith, took Barron's sworn statement, and made their reports. The manager of the claim department of each company had not forgotten the notice he had received from the Jersey City police. The police were notified and put onto Barron. That individual's house was shadowed, and one night the police called and arrested not only Barron, but his disguised brother-in-law and the man

Decker. As Fletcher was still in prison, the authorities now had the whole bunch in their hands.

Joe was sent for and he recognized Barron as the man who had hired him to take the package to the old house; Decker as the man who had done the dentistry work on the corpse, and the brother-in-law of Barron as the man who had abducted him from Zolliver & Co.'s office in the cab. Indictments were found against the four and they were eventually put on trial, convicted and sent to prison for long terms.

As soon as the new Golden Argosy company was in working order the discovery of the lost ledge was made public and created something of a sensation in Goldfield. The mine was relisted on the Goldfield Exchange, but there was little stock in sight, though 25 cents a share was offered for it. Some 25,000 shares turned up between Wall Street and Jersey City and was daily dealt in at Goldfield quotations. Work in the mine was begun on a small scale at first, and the ore assayed high from the start. Joe advanced the money as a loan to the company to carry on the work. Immediately after the arrest of the insurance swindlers, Joe took possession of the remains of Smith, and had them sent out to Goldfield and buried there.

Over the grave he put a fine granite shaft to the dead prospector's memory. Six months later Golden Argosy stock was selling for 50 cents a share, and three months afterward it went to \$1. That made Joe's holdings worth \$300,000. A few months later he turned down an offer of half a million for his interest in the mine.

Before the year was out the company paid its first dividend and kept it up every three months thereafter. Joe was now received as a welcome visitor at Mr. Drew's home, and he took advantage of the fact to pay attention to Grace Drew, to whom he in time became engaged, with her parents' consent.

The Golden Argosy continued a great paying success, its stock going up to \$4, and by the time Joe married Miss Drew he was regarded as a very rich young man, and this wealth all came to him through the strangest tip in Wall Street.

Next week's issue will contain "A SHORT CUT TO FORTUNE, AND THE SMART BOY WHO FOUND IT."

#### DESERT AIR ROUTE NOW IN OPERATION

Direct aerial communication between Egypt and Mesopotamia is now established; the Desert Air Route is open. Three aeroplanes left Bagdad at 4.30 A. M. on June 30 last and, with three stops, reached Cario in 15 hours, 15 minutes.

In the other direction there has been an even better flight, for Air Vice Marshal Sir G. Salmond left Heliopolis at dawn on July 9, and with two stops for refuelling, landed in Bagdad twelve hours later.

The aerial route via Amman and Ramadi to Bagdad, which the Middle East Air Force has been surveying for some time, may now be considered open. This renders unnecessary any further British traffic by way of the Damascus-Palmyra-Abu Kemal route, which has hitherto been followed.

## CURRENT NEWS

## SAW MANY SNAKES

G. F. Sloan, an express messenger, saw snakes the other morning, twenty-eight of them. Sloan's vision, however, was perfectly good, as the snakes were there. A crate in which the reptiles were being shipped from Harper, Kan., to Michigan, broke open and the snakes began to crawl in all directions among the express packages. Sloan captured twenty-four of the fugitives and killed four of them. The incident occurred in an express car.

## THREW BOY IN PIG STY, HOG DEVOURIED HIM

A terrible crime has been reported from Charleroi, Belgium, where a farmer after capturing a nine-year-old boy who was stealing apples locked him in a pig sty with a sow and went away without heeding the youngster's cries of alarm.

On returning to the pig sty, several hours later, he found the sow eating the last morsels of flesh from the boy's bones. The police succeeded in arresting the farmer just as the neighbors were preparing to lynch him.

## WOULD SELL ISLANDS TO UNITED STATES

The *Intransigent* suggests that the French delegation to the Washington conference for the

limitation of armament should offer to sell Tahiti and the Marquesas islands to the United States as coaling stations, contending that they have little except sentimental value for France, but would be of tremendous strategic importance to America.

France never has developed these islands extensively for commercial purposes and they are so far from the beaten track that it took three months for the faithful natives to receive the news of the signing of the armistice.

## POOR IN BERLIN LIVE ON LESS THAN 2 CENTS A DAY.

More than 2,400,000 invalids, cripples, orphans and aged men and women in Germany are trying to live on two marks and 900 pfennigs a day or less, which is, at the present rate of exchange, less than two cents, and only in certain cases, where a city pays a maximum of 150 marks a month, do they receive more, according to an appeal just issued by the League for the Invalids and Widows of Germany, which asks for aid.

The appeal concludes with a bitter reproach that millions are being made in business and the cities are resplendent with luxury while a majority of the population of Germany is going to ruin.

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# Daring Dan Dobson

—OR—

## THE BOY WHO BEAT THE MOONSHINERS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

### CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

For Dan shot out a hardened fist which landed on the left eye of the would-be assailant.

He tumbled over sideways with a vision of more shooting stars than he had ever seen in his life before.

The crowd of mountaineers came surging around Dan now with angry mutterings. It looked as though trouble were going to ensue.

But a new figure loomed into the affair now. And loom was the exact word, for this man was about six feet four in height—his shoulders just as broad in proportion.

His eyes were black and piercing—as cruel, as crafty, as all seeing as those of a bird of prey. His hair was long, swinging in curls below the level of his chin.

With a big broad-brimmed hat, something like a Mexican sombrero, and clothes of black and very fine broadcloth, a black silk sash instead of a vest, and fine patent leather shoes, he was indeed a curious picture in those rough surroundings.

His face was smooth, and his jaw firm and heavy. The man was about forty years old, and a master of men, born to the ruling ability, as one could see at a glance.

"Stand back there, Snakey. What's the matter with you all? You good for no-account white trash!"

He gave the lad with the discolored eye a vigorous shove which sent him spinning into the crowd of his fellows. The big man then strode up to Dan, to whom he gave a look as bold as the gaze of a lion.

"Who are you that you come here and begin to fight with the people of a quiet, peaceful town? That's what I want to know," he asked, in stolid and yet not an uneducated voice.

Dan espied Zachary Shank coming out of the store with his bundle, and the lad understood from his guide's gesture that the man before him was no less a personage than the moonshine king.

He did not falter, nor change color, as he looked, fearlessly into the iron-molded face of the leader of the bad men.

"I don't know as that is any of your business," said Dan, quietly. "I am a stranger here, traveling along the public roads, and when I saw my companion's holster about to be robbed, I gave the sneakthief a lash with a whip, as he deserved. He dropped the lot, and that's all I care about."

The big man glared at Snakey, and then at Dan.

"And, when any one runs for me, and starts to beat me for looking after my own interests, I am not going to wait and take it with thanks. As for who I am, I'm not ashamed of it, but you live here, and it strikes me I ought to be told who you are!"

The big man gave a gasp of uncontrollable surprise, and then laughed outright.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "So you don't know me! That's evident, or you wouldn't be so perky. I am Jake Newcastle."

He evidently expected a look of surprise, respect and alarm, all mixed, to come to Dan's countenance. He was disappointed.

"I am glad to learn your name, sir," answered the new-comer politely; "my name is Daniel Dobson, and I come from Hilldale. I am glad to meet you."

Dan held out his hand in the most innocent and kindly manner—as though he had never heard of Newcastle in his life—and particularly as though ignorant of any reason why his name should be unpopular in this section.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### Dan Receives His Warning.

The stranger had bearded the lion in his den, as one might say.

Jake Newcastle looked about him in surprise, for it had never struck him that any one could live in the State without knowing all about him. The man had the vanity which was resultant from his fine figure, and his success at his peculiar calling.

He had been so used to every one fearing him, and bowing to his superior ability and will-power that this was a new sensation.

"So you are the son of the United States Marshal Dobson?" queried the big man.

"Yes, that's what I am, and I'm proud to have such a father," said Dan, simply.

"What are you doing here?"

Dan looked up quickly at this blunt inquiry, and hesitated before answering.

"I'm just going through this village to examine my father's property which is to the south and west of this town. This is my first trip to this part of the country, and it is very interesting."

Newcastle laughed insolently.

"Well, it's apt to prove too interesting about here, Mister Dobson, unless you go a little more calmly. It doesn't pay to make enemies in the Tennessee mountains. You will find no gentler people in the world than these about me here."

Dan could not restrain a smile as he looked at the angry, vice-marked faces about him.

But Newcastle continued without appearing to notice it.

"Yes, they are all my friends. They would do anything in the world for me. I will ask them not to be harsh with you, provided that you do not trespass on their rights."

(To be continued.)

## FROM ALL POINTS

## CHILDREN LIVE WILD IN RUSSIAN WOODS

Children are living in the woods and fields like young animals in some parts of the famine district of Saratov, says an official wireless dispatch from Moscow. They are little waifs who have fled from the famine-stricken cities and villages, and subsist on roots and grass. When adults approach they flee, showing every evidence of fear.

Overcrowding of children's homes has been carried so far in the Syrzan and Ufa districts that some of the institutions are sheltering four times as many children as they have accommodation for. In these places children take turns in occupying such beds as are available, one small famine victim chawling into a bed the moment another child vacates it.

"Entire families are jumping into rivers, and cases are reported of parents strangling their children rather than see them die by starvation," said the dispatch, which also gives the first report of disorderly migration. "Over the roads in the Irbit district is moving a band of disorderly refugees from starving Volga."

## BIGGEST FERRYBOAT

Real champagne was used recently in christening the new municipal ferryboat Theodore Roosevelt at the Staten Island Shipbuilding Corporation's yard, Mariners Harbor, Staten Island.

The boat, the largest in the country, cost \$375,000. She will seat 1,700 persons, which is a capacity greater by 400 than that of any other ferryboat in the United States.

Mrs. Grover A. Whalen, wife of the Commissioner of Plants and Structures, was sponsor. The great vessel slipped down the way and entered the water gracefully, while the Police Band played and the visitors and workers cheered.

The Theodore Roosevelt is 250 feet long, is rated at 2,000 tons and can develop 3,500 horsepower from engines that will drive her fifteen knots an hour. The boat will be ready to carry travelers on December 1.

Mayor Hylan headed a party of prominent officials and on behalf of the city accepted the boat. He says the people of Staten Island are to be congratulated on having a ship capable of producing such a boat in record time. He went on:

"This is the happiest day of my life. While other administrations thought Staten Island unimportant, this administration has helped to develop it. This will be the greatest borough in the greatest city in the world when it gets its just due."

## WOMAN COMPLETES \$49,000 CONTRACT

Taking up an unfinished road contract made by her husband prior to his death recently, Mrs. Axel Holm, South Range, Wis., has completed the building of four and a half miles of State Highway No. 35 through Pattison State Park.

Mrs. Holm has been on the job at the construction camp all summer, managing the finances

while her son, Oscar, superintended the actual construction.

In December, 1920, the first of Holm & Son was dissolved by the death of Axel Holm, veteran contractor. One of his last requests was that his road contracts should be completed. Mrs. Holm as administrator of the estate, promised that Holm's section of highway No. 35 would be completed by the Holm interests. The route is between the head of the lakes and the Twin Cities and will be a part of the Mississippi Valley scenic highway from New Orleans to Canada.

As many as fifty-seven men have been working at one time on the road this summer. The average has been forty. Mrs. Holm took charge of the construction camp last spring. Besides managing the finances and ordering supplies, Mrs. Holm was camp cook. Feed for twenty teams was another item "the cook" had to look out for.

The \$49,000 job has been completed. A daughter, Vivian, kept the books and was her mother's right hand "man" in the financial management. The oldest daughter, Verna, also is an expert financier. She is employed at the Wisconsin State Bank.

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## The Craigston Mystery.

By COL. RALPH FENTON

I received a telegram from my old friend Jerome Barker one Saturday night, summoning me to his house in the town of Ashton.

I left New York the same night, for the tone of the telegram was most urgent. This is a copy:

"Ashton, October —, 188—.

"Come at once. Must see you without delay."

Jerome Barker was a man well advanced in years. He was poor. An unlucky speculation had impoverished him. He was a widower. One child, a lovely daughter, who was the joy and sunlight of his home, had been spared to him.

She was pure and good, gentle and affectionate. The ideal of womankind was she, and I considered myself a particularly happy man, because she was my affianced wife.

Jerome Barker resided on the outskirts of the country village, in an old tumble-down structure that had once been the pride of the county.

Charles Craigston, a wealthy sea captain, built the place but ten years before he was mysteriously murdered, and the place fell to decay, and passed into other hands.

To the day of which I am writing the secret of who killed Charles Craigston has not been solved, and it seemed that it never would be.

I was not in the country at the time of the Craigston murder, and had no hand in the investigation of the case.

Upon my arrival at Ashton I hurried on foot in the direction of Mr. Barker's. My heart was full of joy. I was soon to enfold the girl I loved in my fond embrace. But I was also curious. I could not help wondering what Mr. Barker could want of me.

Reaching the residence, I was surprised to find it closed. There was no evidence that anyone was at home. The blinds were drawn.

I knocked. No answer. I tried the door. It was fastened. I was somewhat alarmed. Passing to the rear, I tried the door there. This was also secured. All was silence. It oppressed me.

Filled with misgivings, I took a seat on the porch.

"I'll wait a reasonable time for their return," I thought. I supposed they were not out of town. They would not have left after telegraphing me to come at once. Of this I was confident.

It was evening. As the shadows lengthened I became more and more uneasy.

"Why do they not return?"

Again and again I asked myself this question. I could answer it.

I waited an hour longer. Then I set out for the village. I knew my affianced and her father had some good friends there. The residence of these friends I visited, but no trace of Nellie or her father could I find. No one had seen them that day. I was positively alarmed.

Accompanied by some of the people of the town, I returned to the residence of Mr. Barker. The

premonition of impending calamity was strong upon me.

We reached the house. The door was forced. The interior revealed. There was no one there. The house was deserted. The sitting-room was in confusion, and everywhere there were signs of a struggle. I felt that I had discovered the evidence of a crime.

"This house is fatal!" I cried.

"Why so?" a neighbor asked.

"Craigston was murdered here. Now Mr. Barker and his daughter have either been murdered and their bodies concealed, or they have been abducted," I replied.

"Do you think that?" he asked.

"I do."

I sprang to my feet. I was excited.

"I'll find the trail of the assassin or the abductors, and, heaven helping me, I'll track them down if it takes a lifetime to accomplish the task," I said.

I began the investigation. I found the tracks of several men. They wore rough boots with large nails in the soles. The tracks led through the garden. They entered the meadow at the rear of the house. Beyond was the wooded mountains. The forest there swept away for miles. The mountains were inhabited.

A rude class of people—lumbermen and charcoal burners—dwell in isolated cabins there.

It struck me that the abductors of my affianced and her father had gone to the mountains.

In the meadows the grass was thick. Here the trail was lost. I could follow it no farther. What was to be done? I knew not. Upon whom should I call for assistance?

"We may as well turn back. The trail is lost," I said.

I thought I would organize a party and search the mountains. At this moment an old backwoodsman strode forward.

"I've got a dog to hum that are lightnin' on trailin'. He's a bloodhound from Georgia. Sold his parents to an Uncle Tom show. Got right smart fer 'em, too. Specs I better send Jelija Billdad—that's my youngest son, this ere likely cub yere—arter Hunkidora, which are the name o' my bloodhound purp. Bet a coonskin he'll track yer men down fer ye."

"Send the boy for the hound, by all means. Delay not a moment. I'll pay you well." These remarks I made quickly.

"All right, guvner, I'm off," said the boy, and he started on a run for his father's cottage.

We awaited his return. If the dog proved of service, there was still hope that I might find the missing ones.

But what had puzzled me was to find the motive for this outrage. Why had Nellie and her father been carried off? Therein lay the mystery. There was never yet a crime committed without a motive. Mr. Barker was a poor man, and to my knowledge he had no enemies. Nellie was beloved by all. She had no suitor save myself. It seemed that no one in the world could gain anything by her abduction or that of her father.

At last the boy, Belija Billdad, arrived. He led a huge hound. The animal was yellow. He was, moreover, the most savage-looking specimen I ever saw in my life.

Meanwhile the boy had put the hound on the trail. The creature uttered a long-drawn howl. Then he darted away. With long and rapid bounds he dashed across the field. We followed.

We reached the forest-clad mountain. For hours and hours we continued our pursuit. The hound was never at fault.

Day grew to a close. The night came on, and the sky became overcast.

"Looks like rain," said the owner of the hound.

"So it does, and should it rain, will not the trail be lost? The water will destroy the scent," I said.

"That's right, cap; but I do hope, arter all the trouble we've tuck, it won't up and rain and knock us out in that way," replied the old woodsman.

After that we anxiously watched the threatening heavens until the darkness became complete and we could no longer do so. The hours wore on. Midnight came. The sky began to lighten. The moon came out. Still no rain.

"We are all right now, and from the actions of Hunkidora, I take it we are comin' to our game," said the old woodsman.

"Better be cautious now, dad," said the boy Billdad.

After this we advanced with circumspection.

Presently the report of a rifle rang out. Mingled with the detonation of the discharge came a terrible howl.

"Oh, sufferin' Samson! They hev shot the purp. Oh, Hunkidora! Hunkidora!" cried the old woodsman.

As he spoke he bounded forward, gun in hand. Myself and the others followed. A moment later, bursting through a ticket, we came upon a cleared space. There was a ledge of rocks there. In the ledge was the opening of a cave.

A man stood there with a smoking rifle in his hand. At his feet lay the dead body of a hound.

The old woodsman uttered a yell of rage at the sight.

Bang!

Thus his rifle spoke. He fired at the man who stood at the entrance of the cave. The bullet struck him. He fell. We all rushed to him.

At that moment a scream from within the cave reached my ears. I entered it. I had recognized the voice. It was that of Nellie Barker.

Within the cave I found her. I also found her father. Both were prisoners, bound hand and foot. Quickly I severed their bonds. Then a hurried explanation followed.

"The reason I telegraphed for you was this," said Mr. Barker.

Then he continued as follows: "Although I have always kept it a profound secret from all, even from Nellie, she is my daughter by adoption only. She was left at my door when a mere thing not more than two years old. My wife took her and cared for her, and our hearts went out to her as though she were our own child."

"A few days ago a strange, dark-looking man called at my house. He made a good many inquiries, and led me to talk of the past. Finally he asked me if I did not find a little girl infant at my door seventeen years ago. I did not deny it."

Nellie entered the room. At the sight of her the stranger was strangely agitated, and when Nellie was gone he said:

"That girl is the infant who was left at your door."

Then he went on to say that the child was his own, that he had been obliged to desert her, and that he had come now only to assure himself that she yet lived. In conclusion he said:

"I find her in good hands. Keep her as your own daughter always."

Soon after he was gone. That very night, after dark, I saw him lurking near the house; and last night, as we were about retiring for the night, the door was dashed open, and the stranger who claimed to be Nellie's father and two other men, all strangers to me, entered. We were seized, bound and hurried here. The cause of the outrage I cannot comprehend. An hour ago all the men but the one who claimed to be Nellie's father left. He remained on guard.

This was Mr. Barker's story.

As he concluded the boy Billdad entered the cave and said:

"The man dad winged is dyin' and he wants to speak wid you."

Accompanied by the others, I hastened from the cave.

"I have a confession to make," said the dying man as we reached his side.

"I am not the girl's father, but I know who she is. She is the only child and lawful heiress of Captain Craigston, who was murdered years ago. She was stolen the night of the murder by the man I employed to kill Craigston. That man told me he drowned the child; but a month ago he said he had lied, and directed me where to find the girl."

"I caused the death of Captain Craigston for revenge."

"A few months ago I learned that an immense estate in England had been left to Captain Craigston or his heirs. Advertisements appeared in New York and Canada papers saying the said Craigston had last been heard from in America. I satisfied myself that the man whose death I had caused was the Craigston wanted, so I determined to abduct his only heiress, force her to marry me, and through her gain possession of the English fortune."

"That I also abducted her father was to cause the girl to yield, threatening to kill him if she refused to become my wife."

This was the confession of the assassin, for such he was at heart. Though I knew it not, I had been trailing the assassin of Captain Craigston. The mystery of that murder was a mystery no more.

"In a jewel case in my residence—rooms in the city—the address of which you will find on this card, you will find a locket containing the evidence of the identity of the girl," added the dying man with his last breath.

Next day Nellie and I visited the dead man's rooms...

Nellie sank into a chair, silent and nervous, while I opened a jewel case on the table and took out the locket.

It contained the needed papers to establish Nellie's claim to the fortune, and in due time she received it.

Within the year we were married.

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## INTERESTING ARTICLES

## GIANT TORTOISES

Giant tortoises are now known only from a few islands in the Indian and Pacific oceans, on some of which they were excessively abundant up to comparatively recent years. Visiting ships have now so greatly reduced their numbers that on most of the islands they are completely or almost exterminated. On certain of the Galapagos Islands, some 500 miles off the coast of Ecuador, giant tortoises were found in great numbers within the last century, and on certain of the islands were fairly common less than 20 years ago. In addition to the thousands carried away by vessels as food for the crews, great numbers have been killed for the oil alone.

## A LAW TO SAVE FROGS

So great has been the development of the liking for frog legs in France in recent years that steps have been taken to prevent this delicacy of the table, which is peculiarly French, from passing away. All year round frogs were being hunted to please the palates of the gourmets. But now the gourmets themselves have seen the wisdom of not killing the frog with the delicious legs.

They have petitioned the Prefect of the Seine Department to declare a closed season for frogs, and have voluntarily sacrificed themselves so that they may the better feast during the rest of the year.

The Prefect has accepted their recommendation and has declared a closed season between the middle of April and the middle of June.

## WARN INVESTORS HERE

American investors were warned by the Commerce Department to exercise care in purchasing foreign bonds payable in depreciated currencies in the expectation of realizing enormous profits when exchange values return to normal. Certain concerns in this country, the department said, are offering for sale, national, municipal and industrial issues expressed in depreciated currencies which represent only a small fraction of their normal exchange value. This, the de-

partment added, is the case with the currencies of Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Jugoslavia and Hungary.

In some cases, the department said, the prices at which these securities are offered are unduly high in view of the actual exchange rate of the given currency. There have been instances, the department asserted, where there has been great disparity between the sale price of the advertised securities in terms of dollars, and the price at which they could be purchased with American money in the foreign country.

## LAUGHS

"They call this a 'dumb' waiter," observed Mrs. Gossip, "but it has told me the secrets of every family in the house."

"You have your father's eyes, girlie." "Aw, go on." "And your mother's hair." "Ssh! If mother hears you she'll make me take it off."

"Pop, did you hurt yourself last night?" "Hurt myself! What does the child mean?" "Why, Jimmy Smith's pap said he saw you fall off the water wagon."

Tommy—I don't think auntie will stay; she didn't bring any luggage. Johnny—Hush! Look how long the baby has stayed, and he didn't bring anything.

"Say, did yez hear that Pat O'Mulligan wouldn't have his new house built of nothin' but imitation stone?" "No, an' phwy did he want nothin' but imitation stone?" "Because 'tis shamrock."

A teacher of physiology in one of the public schools of Newark, N. J., received this tart note from the mother of one of her most attentive pupils: "Please don't learn our Johnny any moar about his insides as it makes him sassy."

Teacher—You may tell us, Tommy, some of the ways in which the element of fire confers a benefit on the human race. Tommy (who knows something of his father's business methods)—When the amount of the insurance exceeds the value of the stock on hand.

Honey Child—Mamma, Miss Prim has been here an hour and the clock's going yet. Fond Mamma—What do you mean, dearie? Why shouldn't it go? Honey Child—But papa said when you told him Miss Prim was coming that she was enough to stop a clock.

A farmer boy and his best girl were seated in a buggy one evening in town, watching the people pass. Near by was a popcorn vendor's stand. Presently the lady remarked: "My! That popcorn smells good!" "That's right," said the gallant. "I'll drive up a little closer so you can smell it better."

## A FEW GOOD ITEMS

## FRANCE DEVELOPING ITS TIDAL POWER

The tidal power at the mouth of the picturesque River Rance, which finds an outlet at the quaint old town and harbor of St. Malo, is about to be developed by the French Government. The tide at St. Malo has the great rise of thirty feet, and the local topography of the place should be favorable to economical construction of the necessary dams to impound water. The system will be of the double-flow type—that is to say, the turbines will operate both on the inflowing and outflowing tide.

## FLIVVER PAYS HIS WAY IN UNIVERSITY

Flivvers have been used for many purposes. But perhaps the latest is that of the sophomore at Columbia who makes the car pay his expenses through college in addition to having it for his own use.

"I rent it to the fellows in the fraternity house," he said. "They have to pay for the gas and any damage they may do. My rates are \$3 a day. I let them drive themselves, of course, which the garages won't do. The flivver pays all my board."

## 4 SIDED PHOTO AT COST OF ONE

"Get yours. If in four different positions, ladies and gentlemen, for the price of only one photograph! Here y're, lady, get the baby's picture four different ways!"

She stopped.

"You mean that you will take four photos of my baby and charge only for one?" she asked.

"Just lemme show you, lady," replied the photographer, and he placed the child in front of the camera. A few minutes later the photo was ready to be framed. The baby was depicted in four different positions.

The photographer had simply availed himself of three mirrors in the show window of the jewelry store before which he had stationed his camera. The day being Sunday, the store was closed, and the window was empty except for the mirrors.

## POISON IVY PICKED BY CITY DWELLERS

This is the season of the year when the poison ivy bouquet gains temporary favor with the unsophisticated city dweller spending a day in the woods and picking a bunch of fall colors to stand in the vase on the parlor shelf. The plant with its gaudy shades of red and gold matches finely with the oak leaves, golden rod and cattails.

All goes well until some horrified observer who remembers his botany, or better still, his own experience, tells him to drop it quick.

Poison ivy abounds in Staten Island and the hills of Interstate Park, which places are popular with city folks who love to take a bunch of autumn color back to their flats. The poisonous variety of ivy has three leaves and is easily enough detected after its acquaintance has once been made. Some varieties of poison ivy are tree

climbers, while others grow like bushes. Some persons can handle it without danger, while others may become poisoned without having touched it. But experienced woodsmen always give it a wide berth.

## WHALING SCENES WILL BE FILMED

Plans are under way by which the ancient New Bedford whaling bark Charles W. Morgan will be used to carry an expedition to the southern grounds to take films of actual whaling scenes. The object of the trip is to perpetuate for posterity accurate pictures of the industry that made this city famous.

Capt. James A. Tilton, one of New Bedford's veteran whaling skippers, will be master of the Morgan for the trip. The old bark was built here in 1841 and is, therefore, eighty years old and the only survivor of the type of square rigged whaleship seen years ago in many distant ports of the world. She is heavily constructed, as all the old ships were, and many of her original timbers are as sound as the day she was launched. The Morgan is the only survivor of the old fleet still carrying the original rig.

Scenes in the old parts of the city and at the wharves where whaleships still discharge valuable cargoes at infrequent intervals will be taken for use in connection with pictures of the whaleship at sea and incidents of the whale chase...

## TO CROSS SAHARA IN NEW TYPE OF AUTO

The French are planning to establish an automobile connection across the Sahara desert. Experiments are now being carried out under the control of army authorities with automobiles especially constructed to cross the sand and climb up and down the sharp declines.

The plan has been elaborated by an engineer, M. Kegfesse, to cross the African desert from Touggourt, the southern terminus of the Algerian Railroad, to Burem on the Niger, 250 kilometers east of Timbuctoo via Ain-Sala, Tanesrust, Tinzouten and Kidul. The total distance is 3,000 kilometers.

M. Kegfesse intends to make the trip with six automobiles, of which three will conduct the rest half way. He expects each car to make about two hundred kilometers daily, so that the complete journey will take fifteen days. Each car will carry 600 liters of gas.

Experiments carried out under conditions far more difficult than those existing in the desert have given entire satisfaction. The cars are of the caterpillar type with a rubber band, invented by the engineer Hinsten.

If successful, the trip will mean the establishment of road communication throughout the whole of the French African empire, which will be enormously important for the future development of that area. The strategic importance is also considerable, which explains why the military are closely watching the experiment.

## THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

## JEWELS RETURNED

July 4 last, while attending a Wild West tournament in Prescott, Ariz., Mrs. Campbell, wife of Gov. Campbell, had stolen from her a handbag containing jewels. She has just been returned the most valuable of the jewels lost, inclusive of a diamond lavalliere. They were found near the Prescott Park in brush beside the road by Alexander Bish, ten-year-old son of Jerome residents. Mrs. Campbell, notified of the find, motored to Jerome, where she identified the jewelry and liberally rewarded the young finder.

## 3 WEEKS WITHOUT SLEEP

Five hundred and four hours without sleep. And at that, the end of three weeks, Earl W. Pierce, a rancher at Alderwood Manor, near Seattle, Wash., kicked because his wife made him go to bed for a few hours.

Now Pierce is looking for two jobs. He wants to put in a twelve-hour shift twice each day, with the stipulation that he must have time off for his meals.

"Sleep is just a habit," declared Pierce recently. "Since man was born it has been his custom to work eight hours, have eight hours recreation and sleep for eight hours. The average man wastes too much time in bed."

"Just recently I went three weeks without sleep. I never felt better in my life. I'm now looking for two jobs, one working days and another working nights. If allowed time off for meals I feel confident that I can work week in and week out with no sleep whatever."

During the three weeks' trial at sleeplessness Pierce worked all night as a carpenter in Seattle. When off shift he hastened home, had breakfast and then worked about his small chicken ranch until it was time for him to board an interurban car for his job in the city.

"I have never been sleepy in my life," said Pierce. "I have never known what it is to want to go to bed. In fact, if my wife didn't force me to take a few hours' rest once in a while I would never go to sleep."

## NEW VIOLINS BEST

Before a very critical audience of music students and musicians a new trial has just been completed at the Paris Conservatoire of the comparative merits of old and new violins. Let it be said at once that the victory was to the moderns.

Six old Italian violins and six of modern make were selected for the trial, among the former being instruments by Amati, Stradivarius and Guadagnini. All twelve were numbered, and lots were cast for the order in which they should be played. Then in the darkness of the Conservatoire, before an audience of critics the player performed on each violin in succession. He, like the audience, was in the dark and could not know what violin he had in his hands; but he played on all twelve in succession the same piece of music.

Each member of the audience had a voting

card on which to mark the number of the violin which seemed to him or her the finest in tone and general musical quality, and an easy victory went to the moderns.

The first selection was a violin of Mirecourt, the second a violin of Nantes. The famous Stradivarius was only third, with ninety votes fewer than the winner. Two Guadagnini came next, and the sixth selection was a violin of Montreal.

This was not the first time the test had been made, but it was the first time in Paris that modern violins had scored such a success over makes which were supposed to be unrivaled.

## HAVANA TAXIS RUNNING ON RUM

The very taxicabs of Havana, it is said, have recently begun to run on high proof hooch. All the Fords for hire in the city are cruising about town with gallons of alcohol on board, according to an individual who insists his information is reliable. The drivers are not bootleggers. They are burning the alcohol for fuel, he says, and have adopted it because it is much cheaper than gasoline.

Hooch is about 30 per cent. cheaper than gas, according to an official report of the new laws promulgated by the Mayor of Havana.

The Mayor has recently issued a new ruling providing for a reduction in taxicab fares, so that the minimum rate is now 20 cents. It is understood that the rate was reduced at the request of the cabmen themselves in order to increase their business as much as possible. Every little ride helps to burn up the alcohol, which is so low in price that the cost of running a Ford has been cut appreciably. It is interesting to note that the fuel is not wood alcohol, but approximately the same item in which our Colonial forefathers of New England did such an excellent business in their three cornered trading in molasses, rum and slaves.

For this easing up of the travel tariff of the city of Havana is all on account of the overflow of blackstrap molasses. This byproduct of fine white cane sugar must be disposed of somehow, for it threatens to burst the storage tanks and glug-glug-glug along the entire surrounding territory, engulfing acres of Cuba in sticky sweet-ness. Nobody wants to buy that blackstrap for use as molasses. Fine white sugar for which we begged and prayed two years ago is a drug on the market. So the best use the Cubans have been able to make of the molasses is to turn it into alcohol.

There is so much alcohol that the only possible thing they can do with it is to denature it and sell it as fuel for Ford taxicabs.

To increase the consumption to the utmost the municipal authorities of the city of Havana have lowered the fares. Official notices of this reduction carry a serious comment about the way in which the Fords are standing up under this deluge of alcohol.

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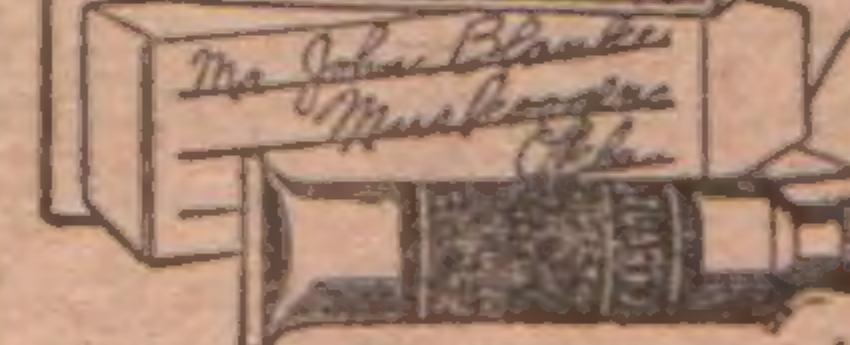
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